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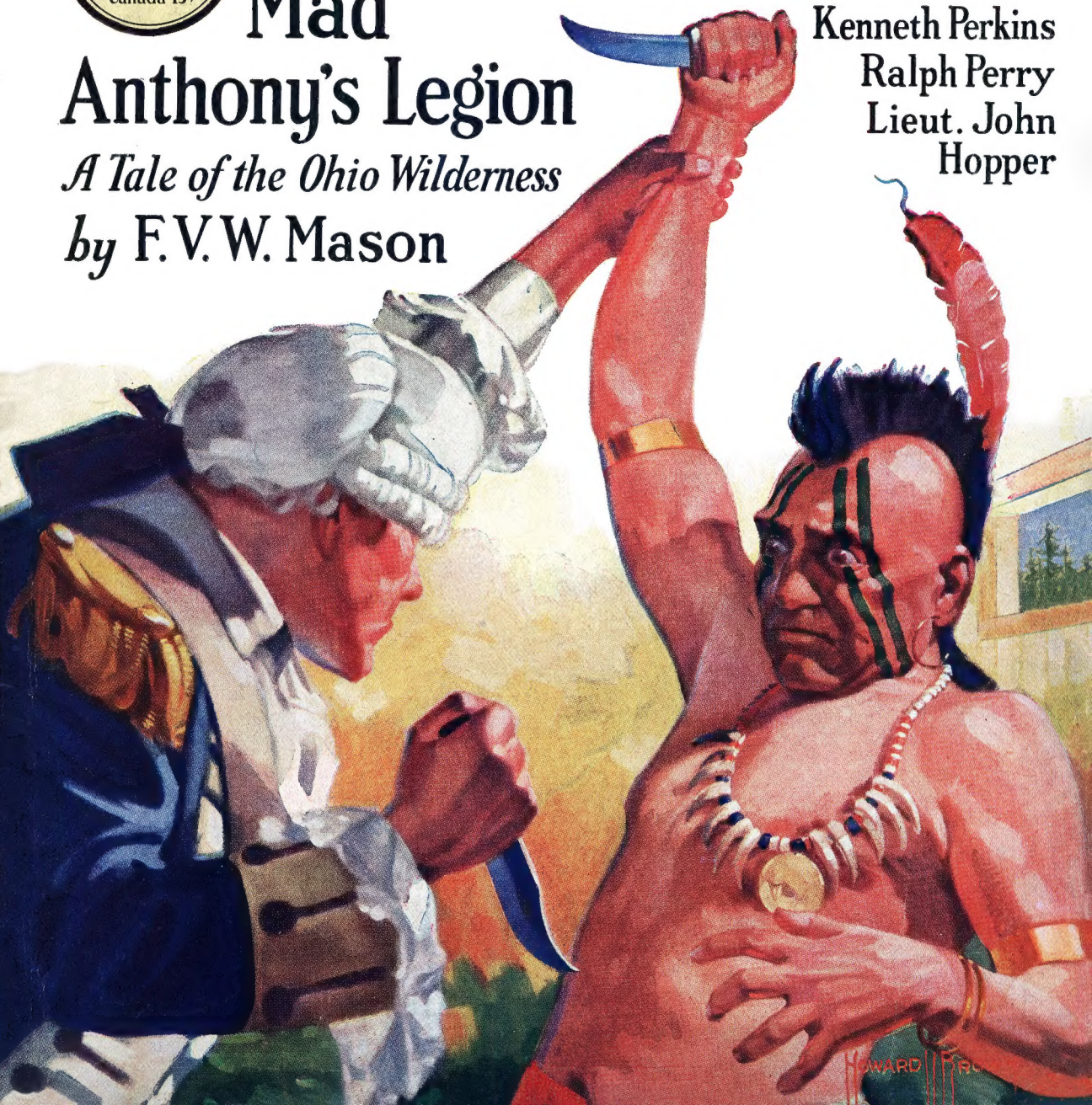
Mad

Anthony's Legion

A Tale of the Ohio Wilderness

by F.V.W. Mason

Kenneth Perkins
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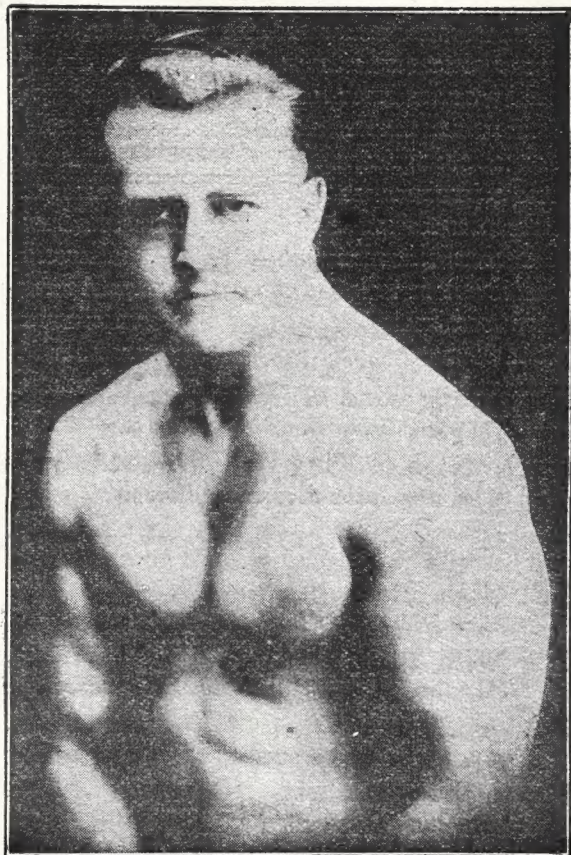
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VOLUME 212

CONTENTS FOR MAY 17, 1930

NUMBER 3

SERIALS

- Mad Anthony's Legion** (Two Parts. Part I) F. V. W. Mason 293
Indians on the warpath in the Ohio wilderness
- Voodoo'd** (Six Parts. Part II) Kenneth Perkins 338
Mystery in Creole New Orleans
- The Wrong Kind of Money** (Six Parts. Part IV) Fred MacIsaac 373
Politics and crime in an American city
- In the Reign of King Ben** (Five Parts. Part V) J. E. Grinstead 409
Feudal war rocks a rangeland empire

COMPLETE STORIES

- The High Place** (Novelette) Ralph R. Perry 314
Bellow Bill barges into Marquesan magic
- The Wild Pitch** (Short Story) Lieut. John Hopper 359
That climaxed a Central American baseball game
- Gold** (Short Story) William Merriam Rouse 398
Death comes to a Canadian wood-choppers' camp
- Evidence** (Short Story) John A. Thompson 426
Prospecting in miners' pockets

OTHER FEATURES

- COVER DESIGN** Howard V. Brown
- A Toad That Never Drinks** Vincent B. Wilson 313
- As Dead as the Dodo** John H. Spicer 358
- Echoes of Pre-Volstead Days** Kathryn Palmiter 408
- The Men Who Make The Argosy**—F. V. W. MASON 430
- Argonotes** 431
- Looking Ahead!** 432

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ARGOSY

ON SALE EVERY WEDNESDAY

VOLUME 212

SATURDAY, MAY 17, 1930

NUMBER 3



The dead men seemed like giant porcupines

Mad Anthony's Legion

With the redskins on the warpath, Captain Hubert Creighton risked worse than death to scout the hostile Ohio forests in the desperate hope of saving American settlers from sure massacre

By F. V. W. MASON

Author of "The Goldfish Mutiny," "Death's Domain," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE BARGE OF DEATH.

CAPTAIN HUBERT CREIGHTON, on detached duty, reined in his horse to watch with undivided attention the erratic progress of

a heavy river-boat. It was drifting, apparently untended, on the placid surface of the Maumee River on its way toward Fort Defiance—that last Ohio outpost built to restrain the murderous savages threatening the frontier in those troubled days of 1794.

"I'll wager Mad Anthony Wayne will be glad to see those supplies—if they ever get there," mused the rider. "Poor devil, 'tis a terrible thing to be sent to stem a rout caused by the inefficiency of others. If he and his Legion fail, I shouldn't doubt that the British get the Ohio Country after all. I wonder what he wants of me?"

The morning being warm even for August, he eased the top buttons of his heavy, deep blue army tunic, and once again fixed singularly dark and piercing eyes on the distant craft.

"Sure, 'tis half an hour now and not a man jack showed his nose," he muttered to himself. "If there's a sober soul aboard yonder boat then I'm one of old George's lobster-backs!"

Keeping his eyes on the drifting barge, he gathered the worn, rawhide reins in strong, wiry hands and, touching spurs to the bay's flanks, commenced to trot slowly along the dusty path that paralleled the river bank. The rider's deep-set black eyes were never still; they flitted restlessly from the awkwardly drifting flatboat to the bank, from there to scan the path he followed, scrutinizing each shrub and clump of trees in the inimitable manner of a frontiersman who has spent the greater part of his life in constant danger of ambush.

"Her crew must be drunk as Hessians," he soliloquized. "And I suppose the precious rascals are intrusted with vital supplies for Mad Anthony's men."

HIS conjectures were interrupted by the appearance of a party of blue-clad soldiers, who, hailing the craft loudly, walked out on a sandbar that jutted out boldly into the dark green current. They stood with the muskets at the "ready" position,

watching the clumsy barge. With its deck piled high with cargo, it came blundering down the current, grated, then stuck on the edge of the bar.

As the craft slowed, the patrol, as Creighton judged them to be, heaved one of their number onto the flatboat's bow; he in turn flung ashore a rope which the balance of the party quickly snubbed about a young birch and so brought the apparently deserted craft to a halt. Creighton, who had studied the barge for well over half an hour, felt his curiosity strangely piqued.

"As it's on the way to the fort," he told himself, "I'll waste little time in dropping down to see what's happened."

With a quick motion of the wrist he put his gaunt bay gelding to the river bank, and with superb horsemanship slid down the steep incline to the river's edge, where he was instantly surrounded by a number of startled, brown-faced men in the smartly cut blue-and-buff uniform of Mad Anthony Wayne's newly formed Legion of the United States.

It was a legion made possible only by the leader's fiery will and personal magnetism. Hampered by small-souled politicians who begrudged every penny spent to save the Northwest empire, and moreover troubled by frequent desertions, Wayne's Legion had none the less been formed and drilled endlessly, a monument to one man's persistence and genius.

"What's wrong?" demanded the rider sharply as he noted the grave looks and shaken appearance of the men at the water's edge. One of them, a red-faced corporal, seeing tarnished captain's epaulettes on Creighton's shoulders, saluted smartly and called the others to attention.

"We don't know, sir," the corporal

said with a sidelong glance. "But it looks right bad. See all them flies, sir? There's something dead in there."

"Here, hold my horse!" With a light easy motion, for all he had been on horseback some eighteen hours without rest, the bronzed Captain Creighton swung down to the sand of the little shoal upon which the flatboat was grounded. How green the rushes and long marsh grass looked against the yellow, unpainted side of the river boat!

"I'LL go with yer, sir, if you don't mind, sir," volunteered the hatchet-faced sergeant in command of the party. "Mebbe it's a trick o' some kind."

As though to belie his words, a puff of wind coming from the stricken boat's bow brought an odor so foul that Creighton gagged an instant. Catching a rawhide line that trailed forlornly over the high, rock-scarred side. Creighton, followed by the sergeant, scrambled to the deck and stood stock-still a moment, his tall, angular figure sharply silhouetted against the hot sky with the sun glinting on his heavy gold epaulettes and the buttons of the dark blue fatigue uniform.

Though shocked to the depths of his being at what lay before him, Creighton, trained in the wilderness, uttered no sound. On the blunt, ungraceful bow lay the bodies of two typical boatmen, clad in ragged flannel shirts and stained buckskin pants. Their backs fairly bristled with arrows, so numerous the dead men seemed like giant porcupines. One of them sprawled with his head lolling drunkenly over the edge of the open fore hatch; Creighton could see the chin with its scanty beard and hairy throat tilted skyward. In the motionless figure's

throat was fixed a long-shafted arrow, winged with red and black feathers.

"Hm," murmured Creighton grimly, "Wyandot war shafts."

He bent over the second figure that lay face down in a pool of dull red blood on which glossy flies settled and rose in noisy swarms. He noted the slash which had preceded the ripping away of the dead man's almost white hair. "Yes, it's some of old Blue Jacket's warriors did this—no mistaking that diagonal cut."

He cast a quick, suspicious glance at the deck load of potato sacks. The sergeant stood by the fallen river-man, peering down the hatch to see, as Creighton had suspected, that that unfortunate fellow's scalp had also been taken. There were a profusion of bloody splatches on the sacks below that point where his head lolled over the open hatchway.

"By damn!" commented the sergeant hoarsely, "this gives me the horrors. Them red devils have been doing this for months now. Last week they was two other boats came in like this."

With a heavy flintlock pistol in his hand, Creighton strode noiselessly aft along the deckhouse, to catch sight of a pair of small bare feet, and upon turning the corner he discovered the hideously mangled body of a small girl child. She lay amid the ruins of her pink gingham frock with her eyes open, an expression of indescribable terror still present in their glazed blue depths. Sickened for all his years on the frontier, the tall, black-haired officer turned swiftly aside, a strange brightness in his eyes.

Inside the cabin itself was a scene of the wildest disorder. In the deep shade at the far end of the cabin the body of a woman, half dressed in coarse homespun, lay pathetically sprawled on

the floor. Creighton's fingers shut convulsively as he saw that she, too, had been scalped. Chairs, table, a baby's crib, all were overturned and on the blood-spattered floor rolled dozens of empty whisky bottles, some cracked, some broken, and a few half full. A few feet away from the woman lay a jaunty little chip hat with a bedraggled scarlet ribbon; and two small, well-made shoes with silver buckles were lying by the side of a bunk. In a smaller bunk farther on was the corpse of a little boy, mercifully slain in his sleep.

Drawers had been pulled open, and evidently searched in haste. A broken string of bright red beads lay scattered on the new pine floor cabin. A blood-dimmed knife with a broken blade seemed the only trace of the intruders.

"Massacred them, then got drunk—the Wyandot devils," the captain muttered.

HE pushed on as he noticed a door leading into the depths of the flatboat. From instinct he presented his pistol when he flung open the door and bent forward, straining to see into the inner darkness of the forehold. Overhead he could distinctly hear the horrified comment of the soldiers who had at last summoned up enough courage to board the charnel boat.

"I've got enough," growled one. "So help me Hannah, I ain't a going to stay no longer and lose me skelp. I ain't forgot what happened to St. Clair's army. I seen 'em lying there skelped, and them what was lucky had their throats cut. So help me Hannah, come the first black night I'm off back to Pittsburgh same as Enoch and Wesley."

"You're right, Arod," growled another. "This here ain't war—it's murder. Them damned Injuns could

hide on a threshing floor, and us with no decent supplies. If it wasn't for Mad Anthony, I'd be drinking my bounty money in Cincinnati now. He's a bully boy, he is."

Creighton paused in the door, intensely interested in the significant conversation going on over his head, and so was off guard when the attack came. Something unseen struck him with a vicious, though glancing blow on the crown of his stiff, tri-cornered felt hat. He was paralyzed for a fraction of a moment, and perforce dropped his cumbersome pistol.

Swiftly recovering from the shock, he reached blindly into the darkness, to come in contact with a powerful slippery shape that gripped him with arms of steel, seeking to crush the breath from his body. Fiery meteors darted before Creighton's eyes as he swayed in a desperate struggle with the unseen figure. He felt a hot, foul breath in his face, fingers that clawed viciously at his throat.

"It's an Indian," he thought subconsciously. There was no mistaking the rank odor of the bear oil used by the braves to groom their straight black locks.

At once Creighton realized he was not as heavy as his assailant; on the other hand he was quicker. Almost immediately he divined the warrior's intent—to wrap powerful arms around him from behind, in order to apply that fatal Indian wrestling grip, which, not dissimilar to a full Nelson, swiftly snaps an adversary's neck when quickly and strongly applied.

Fortunately the floor of the hold was steady and level for all its cargo of boxes and barrels, and Creighton, bracing his booted feet, deliberately allowed the panting savage to achieve the hold he sought. Once he felt the warrior's

arms under his own armpits he abruptly arched his body backward when the savage applied pressure, then, with a mighty heave, bent forward.

As he anticipated, the brave held on for dear life; Creighton was able with a quick heave to lift his antagonist from the deck and fling him bodily overhead, hurling him with a resounding crash to the floor—a crash that must have driven much of the breath from the Indian's sweat-slippery body. Now somewhat accustomed to the darkness, Creighton caught a glimpse of the Indian and, snatching out a hunting knife that hung at his belt, launched himself full on the gasping, half-naked figure. The shaved, bronzed man, too, was clawing at a long-handled skinning knife that dangled in a fringed sheath from his waist band of heavy scarlet cloth.

Creighton could easily have summoned the soldiers and their helpful bayonets by a single shout but, disdaining to do so, grappled once more with the Indian who, though on his back, met the American's onslaught by kicking shrewdly upward with a broad, moccasined foot that flew straight toward the pit of Captain Creighton's stomach.

But he, with the quickness of a lynx's spring, turned sidewise, caught the kick on his hip, and in a trice plunged his gleaming blade above the gaudy mass of necklaces into the Indian's throat—at that point where the neck joins the shoulder and the life-stream beats very near the surface.

Rivulets of sweat were pouring down Creighton's face, and his long, wavy black hair had fallen over his forehead when, with dripping knife held ready, he scrambled to his feet to stand gazing down with alert eyes at the fallen brave, whose swelling

muscles were flexing in the last spasmodic movements of death.

CREIGHTON swore when he stepped out into the light and examined himself. "That red devil has lost me two of my buttons—and I've got to face Dandy Wayne within the hour."

At that moment the sergeant's gaunt face appeared framed in the hatch, and his eyes widened as he beheld the disheveled appearance of that strange young captain who had appeared silently riding down to the river's edge.

"Great Scott, sir," he gasped, darting into the death-filled cabin. "Are you hurt? There's blood on your sleeve."

"Not mine," grunted Creighton, deliberately wiping his knife blade on the fallen savage's breech-cloth. "It would seem that one of the raiders got too drunk to leave; evidently the red devil fell asleep after the massacre and sobered up just in time to jump me. Here, my man, give me a hand; we'll haul him out. I've a mind to see what tribe he is."

At Creighton's careless manner a light of admiration commenced to burn in the sergeant's brown face. The captain smiled also as he saw the sergeant was of a different caliber from the faint-hearted wretches on the bank, for with a grim nod the N. C. O. tugged at one of the bare ankles, while Creighton seized the other.

Together they hauled the limp, bronze-hued figure into the sunlight, kicking aside the whisky bottles and wreckage as they went. This done, Creighton squatted on his heels to examine the embroidery of gaudily dyed porcupine quills decorating the departed brave's knife sheath.

"Humph!" He looked up sudden-

ly. "He was a Delaware or maybe a Wyandot. Let's see his feather bindings." With a strong jerk he pulled the dead warrior's blue-black scalp lock from beneath the head, and turned over the red-tipped eagle feathers again and again.

"He's a Wyandot all right," grunted Creighton, rising to his feet. "I judged so from the red and black war paint. Do you want his scalp?"

"Sure, sir," grunted the sergeant. "That is, if you don't. Them skelps is worth five dollars each in Cincinnati, sir."

"You can have it," smiled the dark young officer. "Call it the reward of virtue for coming on board. I'll just take the murdering brute's belt and those feathers."

"Thank you kindly, sir." The sergeant grinned a gold-spangled grin. "Kin I borrow that knife o' yourn a minute?"

Creighton absently jerked his gleaming blade from its sheath and, with an expert flip, stuck it point foremost in the deck beside the dead Wyandot's shoulder. The soldier caught it up, and in a trice made an incision in the skin above the Indian's left ear. When Creighton, after a brief inspection of the cabin, regained the deck, he heard the footsteps of the sergeant already following him.

"A nice skelp, sir," chuckled the man. "Good strong hair. I'll drink your health with that five dollars, sir."

Creighton spent a little more time examining the remaining bodies, and then the quantities of arrows that, deeply embedded in the cockpit of the flatboat, bespoke the viciousness of the attack which had burst upon and destroyed the unsuspecting and unwary voyagers.

"Let's see now," he murmured to

himself. "That's a Shawan arrow and the short-shafted one's a Delaware. Now we know something: it's true after all that the Five Tribes are on the warpath!" He heaved a long, bitter sigh. "God help the settlers in the Ohio Valley. I wonder if the Four Houses are on the warpath, too?"

After issuing instructions to the shaken, white-faced soldiers on the shore, Creighton knelt on the sandbar to wash his hands at the river's edge. With a detached sense of curiosity he watched the course of a pale red streak that curled from his fingers leisurely off downstream. Then proceeding to the shore he untied his mount, swung up and put the gaunt bay to the bank.

CHAPTER II.

ON TOP OF A RED VOLCANO.

THE sun had reached midday when Creighton, dusty and hot, trotted slowly up toward a regular of the United States Army on guard outside a rude blockhouse of newly felled pines. In obedience to the sentry's hail, he dismounted from his angular, raw-boned bay, and with the rawhide reins dangling from his gloved hand, he advanced farther on foot.

"Halt, and give the password," belowered the sentry, his face very red. Creighton was amused to see how nervous were the fellow's eyes beneath the brim of his shako.

"I am Captain Creighton of the Fifth Regular Cavalry," replied the newcomer in a deep, pleasant voice. "I am on my way to report in person to Major-General Wayne. I don't know the password."

For a moment the sentry stood undecided with the sunlight gleaming bright on his musket barrel, then, turn-

ing his head, he bellowed over his shoulder for the corporal of the guard. At this Creighton's face broke into a mirthless and concerned smile.

"Sentry! Never turn your head like that," he snapped. "Keep your eyes on the challenged person. I could have killed you three times while you were bawling to the corporal."

The soldier—evidently a recent addition to the armed ranks of the United States—hung his head sheepishly and mumbled an excuse.

While he waited the dismounted officer's dark eyes wandered quickly from the tiny fort built of logs with new, yellow ends, to the bastion where sweating soldiers tugged and heaved to raise pointed balks of timber into an upright position to form a palisade.

From the fort yet in process of construction, Creighton's gaze flickered to the long rows of patched and soiled white tents that were pitched in even ranks on a small, bright green meadow; how orderly and businesslike they looked against that emerald setting!

"Sure and I'd know old Wayne's touch anywhere," murmured the captain. "Thanks be there's a real soldier in command at last! No idling while he's about." Everywhere men moved to and fro, though the hot, summer sun beat mercilessly down from a sky of brazen blue.

Presently the corporal of the guard appeared, struggling to button his dark blue tunic.

"All right, Snider," he called to the sentry, when yet some twenty yards away. "Ride on, sir."

Creighton forthwith thrust foot into the stirrup and swung up to the saddle, once more to ride slowly forward.

"Mad Anthony must be hard at work again," he decided as he trotted

forward, mimicked by his image mirrored in the waters of the slow-moving Maumee. When he drew near the corporal, that individual executed a smart salute.

"You be Captain Creighton, bein't you, sir?" he demanded.

"I am," was the dark-faced rider's reply.

"Well, sir, you'd best ride into the fort and find the general right away. He's been a waitin' for you this last week."

Touching spur to the bay, Creighton nodded and moved off at a slow trot and so, without further molestation, rode in through the massive gates of fresh-hewed pine logs.

Once inside the fort's outwalls he encountered a busy scene such as he had beheld many times. It was nevertheless a sight which pleased and interested him always, for the building of a new fort meant one more step westward, a new milestone marking the growth of the United States.

There were lanky civilian teamsters in coarse, brown homespun pants and clumsy square-toed boots of cowhide, driving slow-footed oxen that dragged sledges of logs.

There were soft-stepping Kentuckians of General Charles Scott's militia, in fringed buckskin; they looked at Creighton from truculent hard black eyes and spat aggressively into the powdery white dust lying thick on the ground. Lean and hardbitten they were, dead shots every one of them, and not a man but could show a dozen well-cured scalplocks when liquor loosed their jaws and pack straps.

Then there were regulars, red-faced from their exertions, and dressed, or rather undressed, in odd portions of uniforms. It seemed the whole garrison was working under pressure,

much like men who strive to build a levee against an angry, rising flood. Creighton, ever sensitive of atmosphere, quickly noted the tension and wondered what it all meant.

"They're pretty far into the Indian country," he told himself, "but that's no explanation for the scared look most of them have."

AFTER one or two inquiries the traveler found himself before the two-story log cabin that served as Wayne's headquarters. There, a sprucely uniformed orderly ran out to hold his horse while he dismounted, stretched, and gazed into the log structure.

"Welcome to Fort Defiance," called a red-headed officer who came hurriedly from the door. "Glad to see you again, Hubert. We thought you'd been scalped on the way down."

When they shook hands, on Creighton's handsome face there appeared a wide, engaging smile.

"Glad to see you again, Ware."

"How are things at Detroit?" inquired the red-headed officer, once the greeting was over.

"None too good, Ware," replied Creighton. "I'm afraid the redcoats don't mean to stand by the treaty of '83. It's all but come to open fighting again. How are you faring, here?" His eyes scrutinized Ware Holdbrook's face, noting every shade of expression as the other stepped close and said:

"They're pretty bad, and that's a fact. As we feared, the Delawares, Wyandots, and Auglaizes have already sent out their war arrows. Christopher Miller's gone to find out about the Shawans and Miamis, though we haven't much doubt that they'll throw in with the rest of the Five Tribes."

Captain Creighton's black eyebrows

merged into a single line and he pulled off his fringed riding gloves reflectively. "Is that all?"

"No," replied the other bitterly. "It seems we've got to fight the people back home as well as the redskins. Four months ago General Wayne requisitioned two thousand pounds of powder, and the damned scoundrels sent us a bare five hundred—and plaguey poor powder at that! It's the same with all the other supplies; bad beef, bad flour, and worse whisky. Aside from this the settlers have been doing damn fool things. Not two years ago the silly idiots caught a lot of peaceable, Christianized Shawans and Wyandots, herded the whole lot, man, woman, and child, into some cabins, and massacred them all."

Hubert Creighton's eyes narrowed beneath the shadow of his cap brim. "The fools!" he cried bitterly. "The cursed, addle-headed fools—and that fresh after St. Clair's massacre!" During the conversation he had been ruefully buttoning up his travel-worn tunic, and also made pathetic efforts to brush off the thick accumulation of dust that covered him from cap to dirt-stained spurs.

"Never mind that—Mad Anthony won't mind this time. You'd better go in right away," laughed Holdbrook. He motioned the orderly to take charge of the gaunt bay and Creighton's slender baggage, then turned and said:

"He's been asking for you every other hour this last fortnight, ever since we got the word from Cincinnati you were on your way. At the news of it the old man nearly danced, for all his gout, and smiled for the first time in weeks."

"You don't know what a tremendous reputation you have to live up to, Hubert; your dashed splendid work

with Rogers Clark's expedition has made you a sort of second Daniel Boone. By the way, an old friend of yours came drifting in not long ago—how he heard you were to report to Wayne, I'm sure I don't know, but two days back old Red Eagle, your Algonquin friend, came in, spread his blankets, and announced his intention of scouting with you."

"Did he? By gad, there's good fortune!" Creighton's dark face flushed with pleasure. "'That Algonquin's worth his weight in dollars. And now where?"

"To the general's." In a moment they paused before the door of the headquarters, where Holdbrook took his leave. Turning sharp on his heel, Creighton bent his head a little to pass under the doorway, and at the direction of a sturdy, red-headed captain, followed a short passage to the room where Mad Anthony Wayne, now heavy and tortured by gout, worked endlessly over his maps. Halting in the doorway with a click of spurred heels, Creighton saluted stiffly, his spare, erect body drawn to full height and filling the travel-stained uniform to perfection.

"CAPTAIN HUBERT CREIGHTON is here, sir," announced the red-haired officer who had served as guide. The new arrival had an impression of a large, not unhandsome face dominated by a pair of sharp black eyes which suddenly turned to his direction. Then a deep voice boomed:

"God bless me, captain, you're a sight more welcome than a platoon o' militia. By gad, sir, I'm pleased to see ye."

While Creighton bowed he noted two other figures that sat by the council board, both of whom wore the in-

signia of brigadier-generals. One he recognized at once as pompous, stubborn old Wilkinson. His gray hair stood fiercely in all directions, and was, as Creighton and all the Northwest well knew, the fiercest thing about that noisy braggart. The other brigadier was a heavy-set man with a bald head and a red, vinous nose. His jaw, however, was massive and that of a fighter. He regarded Creighton stupidly from eyes of a bloodshot blue.

"General Wilkinson," cried Wayne, "this is Captain Creighton; and this, captain, is General Posey."

At once Creighton commenced to appreciate more fully the handicaps under which Wayne was conducting this hazardous campaign so very vital to the safety of the Ohio Valley. One of Wayne's brigadiers was a vain, childish old man; the other a slow and ill-tempered semi-drunkard.

In high good spirits Wayne slapped his hand noisily on the table and made the leaden ink bottles on it dance.

"Yes, sir, you are welcome to the Legion, by gad, welcome as a—no, by gad, a battalion o' militia! Hi—Jackson! Bring in some ale."

Creighton saluted and bowed respectfully to both the heavy creatures on the far side of the council table, whereat they nodded briefly and regarded him with a suspicious, jaundiced air as though to say: "So this is the bright fellow we've been hearing about. Why, he doesn't look like so much, after all."

Presently the precious pair got to their feet and, mumbling an excuse, tramped heavily from the room. The sigh that General Wayne heaved as their shadows disappeared over the threshold seemed to Creighton to explain the whole matter. If this campaign were to be successfully con-

ducted, the responsibility would rest on old Wayne's tired shoulders, and no one else's.

"And now, captain, tell me what kind of a trip you had from Detroit?" demanded the elegant figure in blue and buff when an orderly had set two battered pewter mugs of ale on the table of new pine planks.

"Not bad, sir," was Creighton's reply. "But I marked that most of the villagers appeared very fearful; they don't seem to have forgotten the spring of '90 yet."

THE major-general's grizzled head—he had laid aside his wig because of the heat—inclined heavily. "There's the whole story, by gad," he almost groaned. "And yet the flannel-mouthed shouters in Congress grudge me every cent I spend on the Legion. Stab me, captain, the worst days of the Revolution were ne'er like this. After Scott, Wilkinson, and St. Clair got driven out of the Indian territory, and Colonel Crawford was tortured and burned at the stake, those sheep hearts in the Capitol seemed to lose what little courage they had. Mark my words, captain, an I live through this nightmare of a campaign, I am going back to the seacoast and stay."

Mad Anthony's wide mouth tightened into an ominous line as he bent forward and spoke in a lowered tone:

"Our situation here on the Maumee is far from sure. Between you and me, the damned redcoats are back at their old game of stirring up the tribes again. Joseph Brant, the Mohawk butcher, is their chief spokesman."

"Brant, did you say, sir?" Creighton seemed to find a new and more intense interest in the conversation. "Is that murdering old devil down here again?"

"Aye," nodded Wayne heavily, and his massive epaulettes glittered bright as beacons with the motion. "He's begun his bloody work once more; proclaimed to the tribes that he—mark you that!—*he*, a penniless Indian, will pay good English sovereigns for every American scalp that is brought in to the Five Tribes at Ke-kiong-gay!"

"Man scalps, I presume?" inquired Creighton.

"Damn it, no," growled the veteran, flushing angrily. "Any American scalps: man, woman, or child. So far, the tribes have massacred sixty peaceful settlers 'twixt the Auglaize River and the St. Joseph; the dear God above knows how many the red devils ha' murdered since then. . . . And now, captain," he announced, "I come to your part in this campaign."

Mad Anthony sighed and pulled an elaborate tortoise-shell snuff box from his pocket, offered it to the lithe young captain opposite him, and then took a generous pinch.

For some moments the two men sat still, gazing at each other across the paper-strewn table; the weary, handsome old fighter and the straight young captain whose high cheekbones made him look remarkably like those same savages lurking in the tall forests across the Maumee.

CHAPTER III.

ON ONE MAN'S SHOULDERS.

MAD ANTHONY at last shifted his heavy bulk in the chair that creaked noisily, causing a wandering ray of light to catch on two eight-pointed stars that surmounted his heavy epaulettes of gold bullion. For all that he was in the heart of the wilderness, General Anthony Wayne's

uniform was speckless, his wig on the stand near by was well powdered, and the lace neckerchief at his throat was starched and crisp as though he had just quitted a ball in Germantown.

"You're a right good scout, captain," Wayne began, "if half they say of ye is true—for I've heard a lot of your work for Clark. Is it true that you speak the language of the Delawares?"

"Aye, sir," Creighton's black head inclined once, "and that of the Creeks and Winnamacs, and other dialects as well."

"Now, do ye, by gad? Winnamac? Then 'tis the dispensation o' Providence. How does it happen?" he demanded suddenly, his bright blue eyes intently searching Creighton's visage.

"I'm eighth part Indian, sir," announced the young captain with a touch of pride, "and for nine years my grandmother's people hid me away; then my father found me and brought me back to live in Philadelphia."

Wayne's large, humorous mouth parted in a slow grin. "So that's it! I was wondering where you got that color and the high cheekbones." A moment he fell silent and searched among the mass of papers littering his desk. At last he found what he sought—a small, crude map drawn in by hand.

"Look you well, sir, at this chart, which is none so good, but the best I have. Here, at the junction of the Auglaize and the Maumee," and he planted a broad thumb vigorously, "is Fort Defiance, where we are now. The Maumee, as you know, runs a bit north of east to the west end of Lake Erie. To our right lies Ke-kiong-gay, chief town o' the damned Five Tribes. We'll see its ashes soon, I'm hoping. For tomorrow the Legion resumes its advance down the Maumee toward the

lake. I hope to bring the savages to battle somewhere near the Maumee Rapids, just this side of the English post, Fort Miami. Do you see the situation?"

The captain bent over the map, remained silent a moment, then inclined his head briefly.

"Yes, sir, I think so. As you march on the north side of the river, it lies between your right flank and the Five Tribes. But what of your left flank? The forest, and the Indians of the Four Houses? Are those Winnamacs, Creeks, and others friendly? 'Twould be a grave risk to have the Four Houses on your left flank. They could assemble at Ton-eta, and drive you into the river."

The speaker's black eyes fixed themselves inquisitively on the major-general's alert, though heavy features, and watched the lines of anxiety that appeared.

"That," explained Mad Anthony impressively, "is just the reason I sent for you." He heaved his heavy body up and, limping because of the gout in his left leg, went to the door and opened it quietly, looked out, then returned to his seat at the pine table.

"The Legion, alas, is honeycombed with unreliable men," he muttered in explanation. "I've a bare six hundred men I can really trust. With the other nine hundred I've no choice but to be deuced careful.

"Here, roughly, is my problem: the British despite the treaty of 1783 ha' insolently refused to evacuate Fort Miami and their other strongholds along the Ohio and the Maumee. They haven't the strength to hold the land unaided, so, ever since the end of the Revolution, they have been stirring up the tribes to drive us back. As a further spur, captain, I'll tell you

that this expedition is the last our government will risk. After the terrible defeat of General St. Clair they all but decided to let the damned Britishers have this whole Northwest Territory.

"It takes no soothsayer to make you see, captain, that this expedition of mine is to determine whether the United States will be bounded by the Alleghanies or by the Mississippi. Should I lose, not only will every man of my command be massacred, but also"—the weary old general's voice dropped low and his hand beat time to emphasize his words—"every man, woman, and child in the Ohio country will be murdered as well! By gad, sir, this expedition must not, cannot fail! 'Tis a second Stony Point!"

WITH growing alarm Creighton listened to the old man's deep voice as he stated facts that were as appalling as they were indisputable. He himself knew only too well how very insecure was the hold of the United States upon the immensely fertile Northwest Territory, and he dreaded to hear Wayne's next words.

"Yesterday this headquarters received positive assurance that the Sachems of the Five Tribes have decided on war to the end. Thanks to Campbell at Fort Miami, the savages have got plenty o' good British muskets, ball, and powder. Our scouts, Captain Wallace and Lieutenant MacClellan—" Here Wayne glanced up half-expectantly. "Ah! I see you know them. 'Tis not strange."

"Yes, sir," smiled Creighton, "splendid men; I know them well. We served together under General Clark."

Wayne shifted his ample bulk again, and apparently fixed his attention upon a small swarm of flies that buzzed lazily overhead.

"As I was saying, these two gentlemen are at present over the Maumee dressed as savages and spying on the Winnamacs and others of the Four Houses north of the river. Old Christopher Miller brought me word this morning that Blue Jacket and Little Turtle of the Five Tribes have concentrated the pick of their warriors near the rapids. My motto has always been 'attack' when conditions warrant it. I shall try to bring them to a pitched engagement before they reach their full strength—though even now they outnumber us six to one. I have therefore issued orders for the Legion and Scott's Kentucky militia to march to-morrow."

"But, sir," objected Creighton swiftly, "how can you risk an advance with your left flank exposed? As I understand the situation, you are far from sure what the Four Houses—that is, the Senecas, Winnamacs, Watsekas, and Creeks—propose to do. They may at this moment have sent out their war arrows and cast their lot with Joseph Brant and the Five Tribes."

"Aye," grunted Mad Anthony, wearily passing a hairy hand before his eyes. "'Tis that which plagues me beyond measure; 'tis their intentions I don't know." He suddenly leveled a brown forefinger pistol-like across the table. "And 'tis you who must find out, 'tis you who must keep the Four Houses neutral, at least until I have dealt with the Five Tribes."

At this Captain Creighton straightened up and his dark eyes began to glitter with excitement, but he made no comment, only leaned over the table and fixed his gaze on the map as Wayne continued:

"'Tis a terribly dangerous and difficult thing. Even now it may be too

late, but I must ask you to take the chance. How you'll reach the sachems of the Four Houses at Ton-eta, I'll not venture to tell you. But you *must* keep the Four Houses neutral in spite of hell, high water, or British gold!" Something of the fire that had inspired the famous charge on Stony Point lit Mad Anthony's fine eyes now.

"Come what may, captain, you *must* keep the Four Houses neutral," he repeated. "For ten days, at least, if you cannot keep them off the warpath permanently. Old Swift Buck hates us—and with good reason—but he loves Little Turtle of the Wyandots even less. That is all I can tell you. How you are going to win your way to the village of the Four Houses I haven't the temerity to suggest. I know it's fifty miles of forest filled with roaming savages, wild beasts, and old Alex McKee's halfbreed traders, who are worse than either. But you must gain the ear of the chiefs in council."

Mad Anthony sighed gustily and drained the last of his ale, setting down the pewter mug with a bang. "'Tis a terrible load I put on your shoulders, Captain Creighton. Over ten thousand American lives 'twixt here and Pittsburgh depend on your keeping Swift Buck and Green Snake friendly. If they strike my left flank I'm as lost as was ever Braddock, and 'twill be St. Clair's disaster all over again. . . . You'll try it?"

The stuffy little cabin room was very quiet; only the sound of busily employed axes and spades outside broke the stillness while Creighton looked and looked at the little map, memorizing its every line. Finally he raised his eyes and the dark head swayed gently with assent.

"Sir," said he in a low, deliberate voice, "I am honored that you should

repose such trust and confidence in me. I promise nothing; events have sped so long and so far it may well be a hopeless mission, but rest assured I will do my poor best to bring about the ends you desire."

"By gad!" roared Mad Anthony, and sprang to his feet in an impulsive gesture of that genuine enthusiasm which endeared him to his command. "Would to God I had you for a brigadier instead of that pompous stuffed coat, Wilkinson; 'twould be a different campaign!"

CHAPTER IV.

UNWARY BRAVES.

FOR a long while the two remained bent over the table, then Creighton bade the general good-by and went about his preparations. First he sauntered out to that portion of the camp where were reared the gayly colored tepees and lodges of friendly Indians, serving as guides to the expedition. About this quarter of the camp he wandered in apparent aimlessness for a space until his eye fell upon a powerfully built brave in a lynx fur cape who squatted on his heels, cooking a small bird on a spit and humming a little song. Creighton moved silently until he stood behind the savage's back.

"Greetings, Red Eagle," he said softly.

The Indian went on cooking. "Greetings, Tall Bear," he replied without looking up. "What spirit of good fortune brings my brother so far from the shore of the Big Sweet Water?"

Creighton grinned. How like the big Algonquin was that feigned impassiveness! No less than three eventful years had whirled over the Ohio country

since last they had journeyed and fought side by side, yet Red Eagle neither smiled nor stirred a muscle when he heard the familiar voice.

Smiling in high pleasure Creighton sat himself down on an empty powder keg while Red Eagle finished his cooking. When the Algonquin at last rose to his feet, he took him to the shade of the finished palisade and there consulted him at length.

"You will bring the war panoply, at dusk, then? Is that understood?"

Red Eagle's hatchet-like face changed not at all as he replied: "It shall be as Tall Bear directs. Red Eagle will be there with the feathers of a dog-born Shawan of the Five Tribes."

They exchanged no more words, Red Eagle taking himself off in the direction of the Indian quarters and Creighton to the tiny room assigned to him, where he remained all afternoon with the express intention of keeping his presence as unnoticed as possible. For a while he washed and then slept that deep dreamless sleep of the long weary.

When he rose great changes had taken place in his appearance, for after the evening wind stirred the pine forests about the newly-constructed fort, there stepped from Captain Creighton's room a Shawan brave completely arrayed from nodding, scarlet war feathers tipped with tufts of horse hair, to heavy deerhide moccasins, bravely decorated with red and black dyed porcupine quills.

The new warrior's head was smooth-shaved but for a scalplock of straight, black hair rising from the crown. Furthermore, he was as brown as any hostile brave in Little Turtle's camp, and on his broad, muscular chest clicked a double necklace of lynx claws interspaced with tiny lustrous shells

from the Great Lakes. Save for a dull brown breechcloth, several copper arm-bands, and the moccasins, this new Creighton was quite naked.

Disdaining musket or cumbersome pistols, he carried only a tomahawk in a gayly beaded sheath and the knife taken that morning from the fallen Wyandot aboard the flatboat. The captain's naturally good-humored face was completely disguised by a weird and ferocious pattern of black, carmine; and ochre paint. The only article not essential to his array was an extra large doeskin tobacco pouch that, filled to repletion, dangled beside the knife.

Mad Anthony, who came to bid farewell, opened the door only to start back with a gasp of amazement, his hand clapped to his sword hilt.

"On my word, captain," he muttered, hugely pleased, "'tis marvelous, beyond belief." He stepped forward and held out his hand, eyes riveted on those of the tall savage. "Remember, captain, nothing less than the fate of the Northwest Territory lies in your hands! I give ye Godspeed! Would that I could go with ye."

The fierce longing in the veteran's florid face touched Creighton's quick sensibilities.

"Would that you could, sir," he murmured swiftly. "I've heard the redcoats thought you were the very devil during the Revolution."

A FEW more words of farewell and Creighton made his way below to slip noiselessly through the shadows outside the gate to that spot where Red Eagle, accompanied by Lieutenant Holdbrook, awaited him. Then, aided by the uniformed officer, they were passed through the triple ring of sentries circling Fort Defiance, and

merged at once with the somber shadows of the forest.

Once in the cool of the woods Creighton drew a deep breath, his muscles tingling, while his whole personality seemed to change. Trotting along the twisting trail he reveled in the free play of muscles no longer cramped and restrained by the garments of civilization. He felt an almost overwhelming impulse to utter just one fierce ringing whoop that would strike terror to the sentries who, fearful of every fluttering shadow, marched endlessly back and forth. Even Red Eagle noticed the change. Creighton saw the big brave smile in the starlight.

"My brother is all Indian now," grinned the Algonquin. "Tall Bear is indeed the descendant of old Eagle Claw's daughter."

Once clear of the immediate vicinity of the fort, the two broke into a slow, noiseless trot, skirting the tree-shaded banks of the broad Maumee. Like a great wave gathering speed, so were the white man's perceptions becoming increasingly acute; not the drowsy twitter of a bird nor the faint squeaking of a white-footed mouse now escaped Creighton's ears.

What luxury it was to feel the dew-wetted leaves brush against his legs, what ecstasy to feel the tiny silken spider threads break across his chest! How sweet was the breath of the forest tinged with the pungent odor of the pines, and the sweeter scent of the wild honeysuckle and the clean smell of the lush grass growing at the river bank!

Keeping the Maumee in sight, they trotted steadily onward. Then, all at once, they stopped by mutual unspoken and unsignaled accord to stand motionless, merged with the dark tangle of a

scrub oak thicket. Creighton and the Algonquin turned their heads this way and that, sniffing softly, exactly as does a wary old buck who scents the approach of danger.

"Wood smoke," breathed the taller of the two figures, "coming from the ridge ahead."

"Hostile is a fool to build fire so near post," contemptuously grunted Red Eagle. In the semi-darkness Creighton could see the Algonquin's eyes wander restlessly back and forth, and watched the tip of his tongue wetting those thin lips almost hungrily.

In a few instants the voyagers were creeping noiselessly forward, circling down wind lest the chance crackle of a twig be more loudly heard. Presently Creighton caught the dull glow of a tiny fire reddening the bark of an oak which spread its mighty boughs over a little fold in the earth. At the sight a hot lust welled through the scout's being, and with astonishment he realized that the razor-edged knife at his side was already free of its sheath.

"Hold fast, fool," he warned himself. "This is no scalp hunt, you've got a mission." A few yards to the left he caught a glimpse of Red Eagle creeping soundlessly toward the lower end of the hollow, and accordingly moved a few feet further forward to listen intently.

"The crude fools," he thought. "Any but an idiot would have rigged a hide blanket to hide the glow."

For some minutes nothing but the crackle of burning wood could be heard, then the sound of voices, very low and indistinct. The scout patiently wriggled forward another eight or ten feet and at last found himself at the opposite end of the hollow, perhaps thirty feet from his invisible companion. With infinite precaution he

raised his head among the leaves of a thick bush, taking care that his body should not appear outlined against the starry sky.

He felt a wild exultation quicken his heart as he made out the indistinct dark outline of three braves lolling sleepily about the embers of the fire that had betrayed them. After a moment's scrutiny he adjudged them Wyandots by the peculiar sickle shape of the tomahawks lying beside them. From the savages his gaze wandered to three flintlock muskets that stood propped against a log some three or four feet away.

The minutes passed with incredible slowness while the scout in the underbrush remained as motionless as a rabbit that watches an enemy approaching. Should he ignore this careless, tempting quarry and pass on through the forest toward his goal at Ton-eta, or should he, when the third man fell asleep, give the signal and with Red Eagle swoop to the attack? A moment he wavered, pondering deeply the first step in a slowly evolving plan. Then inspiration burst upon him and with a deliberate gesture he jerked out his war hatchet and crept silently forward.

As he had previously observed, two of the recumbent braves were already fast asleep, their chests rising and falling regularly beneath the tawdry glittering ornaments which covered them, but the third warrior, a sub-chief if one were to judge from the elaborateness of his panoply, kept arousing himself to relight with embers the bowl of a long-stemmed clay and reed pipe.

Precious minutes were slipping by, minutes that meant much to Creighton and his companion invisible among the shadows across the hollow. Then,

amid his perplexity, came the recollection of a stratagem that had served well in the past. Placing the tip of his forefinger against the roof of his mouth, the scout moved it gently back and forth imitating to uncanny perfection the shrill squeak of a frightened wood mouse. The sub-chief drowsily turned his bullet head in the direction of the sound and blinked at the underbrush like a sleepy cat.

Poised and ready Creighton beheld Red Eagle's long-limbed form silently materialize at the opposite end of the depression. With a brief, fierce rush the Algonquin pounced upon the wakeful Wyandot and in a trice buried his hatchet deep in the unwary chieftain's brain.

It was the work of a very brief instant for Creighton to bound into the gully and strike down the nearest of the two sleepers while Red Eagle disposed of the other. It was all over surprisingly soon. The half-awakened Wyandots were scarcely in motion before the attackers' gleaming hatchets flashed red in the firelight and put a definite end to their careers of blood and savagery.

The whole attack had been executed almost in dead silence, yet there at the feet of the conquerors lay the three Wyandots, draining their blood on the flattened grass and dried leaves.

Red Eagle spat, grinning wolfishly as he uttered a grunt of satisfaction, then stooped—as was the custom of the day—to take the scalps of the fallen. Meanwhile Creighton, with a purpose strong in his mind, strode off into the silent starlit forest to return a few moments later, a curl of silvery birch-bark in his hand. Then, by the light of the embers he dipped a chewed twig end into the most convenient fluid—the blood of the nearest Wyandot—and

proceeded to write in the picture language of the Creeks:

"Thus to the liver-hearted Wyandots! Stay at home and grind corn, O men with the brains and muscles of chipmunks! Send your squaws to do your fighting."

A grim smile of childlike pleasure twisted Red Eagle's face as he at last fathomed the purport of the picture writing, and when Creighton affixed the symbol of Three Fishes—a prominent Creek chieftain—he burst into a silent chuckle that set his broad shoulders to jiggling in the ruddy fire light.

"That ought to make a good start toward setting the Five Tribes at the throats of the Four Houses," mused Creighton, as he fastened the bark strip with its taunting message on the breast of the fallen chief. Then, stamping out the last sparks of the fire, he beckoned the Algonquin who was delightedly braiding the scalps of the fallen.

"Come, O brother Red Eagle," he muttered. "We have many leagues to go and the stars climb high."

CHAPTER V.

RED DISASTER.

THE remainder of the night they pushed warily on, for the tangled forest was dangerously populated by a vast but invisible host of warriors. Three or four times Creighton and Red Eagle drew back in sudden alarm as they all but stumbled on encampments of the sleeping enemy.

Once they were forced to fight, for a wakeful Creek brave opened his mouth to utter a warning shout causing Creighton to hurl his hatchet with a deadly aim, lest the outcry have disastrous result. It sank deep in the

Creek's brain silencing him forever, but the crash of his fall instantly aroused a Winnamac who lay sprawled on the warm, leaf-covered ground. Him Red Eagle strangled, for the warrior was somewhat smaller and only half awake.

The presence of these two braves of the Four Houses in this hunting-ground of the Five Tribes gave rise to a keen fear in Creighton's mind that already all was lost. His agile brain, however, saw in this mischance a means of furthering the policy he had embarked on. Once more he scribbled a bark message, but this time in Delaware symbols:

"Death has come to Crow Foot and White Raven and will come to all other dogs of the Four Houses that dare stand to men of the Five Tribes."

Once more the two sped forward; but as the dawn smell grew strong in the forest Creighton felt his heart sink.

"O Red Eagle," he said, "our tongues must indeed be of silver, for the warriors of the Five Tribes are so many we must speak with the voice of the waterfall to be heard. Remember; if we meet men of the Five Tribes, we are seeking the wigwams of the Wyandot, Little Turtle."

The sun was still below the horizon when the expected happened and a swarm of menacing Delawares materialized from apparently bare ground. Instantly Creighton's hand shot above his head in the peace sign. The war party, recognizing the Shawan panoplies of their supposed allies of the Five Tribes, in turn made the peace sign. The chief in command—a brutal-featured savage who wore at his belt two small scalps of bright yellow hair—advanced ominously.

"Wherefore do my Shawan brothers go away from the appointed

meeting-place?" he growled and thoughtfully fingered the stock of his long-barreled musket, suspicion manifest in his bright eyes.

"We bear news," replied Creighton haughtily. "News that the paleface warriors of the Fifteen Fires* have begun their march. Their numbers have increased as do a rabbit tribe."

From the corner of his eye he studied the fierce, eagle-featured men about, saw their black eyes widen with surprise, and watched them draw apart by twos and threes to converse in harsh gutturals, their oiled naked scalps gleaming dully in the first rays of sunrise while their scarlet-tipped war feathers nodded gently.

A long moment the Delaware chief stood silent, gazing at Creighton with smoldering eyes as though he longed to hurl himself forward, but he seemed to remember with evident reluctance the fact that the Five Tribes were, for the present, allies. With a deep sigh, he beckoned his party to resume their interrupted progress toward the rapids of the Maumee.

When the sun was fairly above the horizon Creighton and the watchful Algonquin halted long enough at a deep, emerald-green pool to drink and to hastily swallow a few mouthfuls of dried meat and cold potatoes brought from the fort.

Red Eagle, from the back of his red breech-cloth, pulled out a diminutive tobacco pouch and a short-stemmed red clay pipe. Squatting low on his hams the Algonquin tamped the bowl full, and produced a flint, steel, and tinder box. Creighton, glad of the chance to rest his unhardened limbs, lay still, watching the other's preparations to smoke.

"And why does my brother, Tall Bear, not kindle his pipe?" Red Eagle was inhaling deeply with an effort that made his gaunt cheeks look almost fleshless. Creighton shook his head and for answer tapped the large tobacco pouch at his side.

"This tobacco is strong," he stated enigmatically. "Too strong to smoke very much. Tall Bear will wait."

When Red Eagle's pinch of tobacco had smoldered out and he had returned the pipe to his loincloth, Creighton sprang to his feet, lazily flexing his muscles until the ripple of muscles beneath the smooth, bronzed skin played like wind-ruffles over the surface of a pond.

THE travelers now deserted the Maumee Valley proper, to strike boldly to the left over a series of high rock ridges that were sparsely covered by scattered pines and scrub oak. Up and up they climbed until at last Creighton had a clear vista of tree tops stretching off on every side. Far to the rear he thought to detect a faint yellow blur which must be Fort Defiance. His eyes sought the river, stirred with the thought that somewhere beyond, hidden beneath that vast carpet of mottled green, lay Ke-kiong-gay where Blue Jacket and Little Turtle of the Five Tribes hearkened to the wily suggestions of Joseph Brant.

Joseph Brant! Creighton frowned at the thought of that English-trained Mohawk who cunningly plotted the extinction of the white race east of the Alleghanies. The infant nation had no more implacable enemy than Brant. At last the scout turned his handsome aquiline face to the front and felt his heart beat more quickly, for some-

*The fifteen States comprising the Union at that time.

where down yonder lay 'Ton-eta, his goal.

Was he too late? A small evil voice deep within him cried out that he was; shrieked out that Green Snake and Swift Buck had already committed themselves and the Four Houses to bloody, merciless war against the Fifteen Fires. Unaccountably depressed, Creighton drew a deep breath and raised his eyes to the morning sky as though to seek help in his hour of trial, and ever in soul-chilling refrain the burden of Mad Anthony's words came back to him:

"The fate of this expedition—of the Northwest Territory and ten thousand American lives—rests with you."

During the rest of the morning, he and Red Eagle repeatedly encountered or avoided parties of Shawan braves, who, hurrying down the Maumee Valley, sought to get their share of the blood and properties of terrified settlers. By afternoon Creighton, from a ridge top, counted as many as sixteen widely scattered columns of smoke that, climbing lazily over the tree tops, marked the end of some pioneer's dream of peace and plenty.

The travelers had reached the edge of the Four Houses' territory when Red Eagle, traveling a few paces in the lead, suddenly held up a warning hand, then flattened to the earth like a partridge that sees above him the outline of a hawk.

"A whiteface," he murmured under his breath when the scout crawled up. "Does 'Tall Bear see him?"

Creighton's eyes darted back and forth through the half-grown timber lying at the foot of the slope. Then, at last, he caught the gleam of a musket barrel and a glimpse of a black bearded man in a coonskin cap who moved silently over the forest floor.

"Who is it?" demanded Creighton. "A *coureur de bois*?"

"No," grunted the Algonquin. "This whiteface is trapper from Alexander McKee's trading post, near the redcoats' Fort Miami."

By dint of some skillful stalking, the two scouts were able to descend on the tall, bearded man in fringed buckskin in such a way as to prevent any thoughtless shooting.

"Peace!" called Creighton from a clump of boulders a bare ten feet above the trapper's head.

"Peace!" echoed Red Eagle a few yards behind. With the swift spring of a startled buck, the trapper leaped to the shelter of a tree stump, cocking his gun with the same motion. Then Creighton watched the coonskin cap being thrust up on a stick—an obvious invitation for the hidden pair to fire and so betray their position. The American uttered a scornful laugh.

"Is our white brother's hearing so bad? Take the water bear skin cap off the stick. See, 'Tall Bear bring peace!" Risking a shot he stood erect, a wiry, straight figure clearly outlined against the hillside, right hand extending above head, palm outward, in peace sign.

"PEACE," called the invisible trapper in English with a French accent. "Who are you?"

"Red Eagle and 'Tall Bear of the Shawan tribe," grunted Creighton, admirably simulating the part of a slow-witted buck. "Whither goes our white brother—to the warpath?"

"*Non*," was the trapper's reply, "Pierre Montagnac wastes no time in warfare—*'du tout!* Scalps brings little money save when Joseph Brant comes to the Ohio country."

With cautious steps Red Eagle and Creighton advanced to the trapper's

position, making continual friendly motions as though the sight of a white man were an awesome and an unusual thing.

"*Viens,*" grinned the swarthy, black-bearded trapper waving a paw-like hand. "Come, *mes amis*, I will not hurt you. Whence come you?"

"We return from far lands," explained Creighton in the Shawan tongue. "We went to find new hunting grounds. A moon ago two wandering Mohawks told us of the war that is to be between the Five Tribes and the Fifteen Fires. We have come back to fight with our people. Tell us what has chanced."

The trapper uttered a long laugh, pulled out a red clay pipe and tendered his tobacco pouch. "*Pardieu,*" he chuckled. "Pierre Montagnac would be an almanac to tell you all, but this much is worth knowing. The Five Tribes lie in wait for the *armée* of the Fifteen Fires by the side of the Maumee Rapids where, five summers ago, came a great wind, a hurricane that hurled down many great trees so that now trees lie like the dead after an Iroquois raid. It's of the most difficult terrain; there will the warriors of the Five Nations seek to stop the advance of *les sacrés Américains*."

Creighton affected but a casual interest, and rocked on his heels, drawing aimless designs on the bare ground with a little stick.

"Then 'tis said," continued the trapper impressively, "that the warriors of the Four Houses—"

The scout's heart gave a great leap, like a buck clearing a windfall, and the blood seemed to roar in his ears.

"—will fall upon the Americans' left flank."

"What foolish talk is this?" suspiciously grunted the muscular savage known as Tall Bear. "Since when have the women-hearted Four Houses found courage to take the warpath?"

"But 'tis true," insisted the trapper, excitedly waving his pipe. "All is arranged. Green Snake and Swift Buck delayed long, but now they have sent out their war arrows."

Creighton found it hard to keep his face an impassive mask; every syllable the French-Canadian spoke hammered a knell to his forlorn hope.

So it was too late after all! Mad Anthony's Legion of the United States would be taken in the flank, and a disaster more complete, more appalling than that which had overwhelmed St. Clair, would ensue! Farewell to Northwest Territory; it would be abandoned, its panic-stricken settlers hurrying back to the overcrowded sea-coast.

Meanwhile the burly trapper was still talking. "I see that my Shawan brothers have no muskets," he observed. "Hearken to my words. On your way to Ke-kiong-gay, halt at the fort of the redcoats on the Maumee. There they will give you each a new musket together with powder and ball."

Red Eagle threw back his head and uttered a short, incredulous laugh. "Let the whiteface tell his tale to the children and the catbirds," he grunted. "Since when do the redcoats *give* away crown muskets?"

"Yes, my brother," said Creighton in an aggrieved tone. "What Pierre Montagnac tells us is madness. No war arrows have been sent between the Great King* and the Fifteen Fires."

"All the same," insisted Pierre,

*George III of England.

drawing strongly at his pipe, "what I tell you is true. The redcoat Major Campbell promised Little Turtle he would send twenty-five of his best soldiers, dressed as trappers and traders, to guide the attack and so overwhelm the Americans."

THE pleasant little sunlit glade in which he found himself seemed to spin about Creighton's head, and a thousand demoniac voices to shriek "Disaster!" in his ears. He felt much like a shipwrecked sailor who, lying on an ice-floe, sees the waves breaking it away bit by bit, inexorably bringing him nearer to certain destruction.

But for all his dismay he skillfully led the trapper, fresh from the headquarters of the conspiracy at Alexander McKee's trading post, to tell all he knew of the wretched, treacherous story. As though to pile the Pelion of

ill fortune on the Ossa of disaster, the trapper went on to describe how Joseph Brant together with three hundred of his fiercest and most experienced Mohawks had joined Little Turtle and Blue Jacket; how that wily Mohawk was even now contemplating a journey to Ton-eta, there to banish the last hesitations of the sachems of the Four Houses and to inflame them to a fierce and merciless war.

Eyes wide in childish incomprehension, the two bronzed savages squatted patiently on their heels, Tall Bear subtly tickling Pierre Montagnac's ego until the buckskinned voyager told every word he knew.

"And so," concluded that picturesque character, as he pulled the coonskin cap over his greasy black locks, "the sachems of the Five Tribes are sending a picture writing to Four Houses to tell when and where the great massacre is to take place."

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.



A Toad That Never Drinks

THE endurance record for abstaining from water is supposed to be held by the camel, but the horned toad can give the camel a big handicap and beat it easily. For the horned toad never drinks. At least no one ever saw a horned toad take a drink. It is believed that the little reptile, which is found in arid regions of the western United States and Mexico, absorbs all the moisture it needs through the pores of its skin. In parched desert regions where other forms of life would perish miserably, the horned toad thrives and waxes fat.

The horned toad really is a lizard, although with the exception of its very short tail it is toadlike in appearance. The name is given to the so-called toad because of the hornlike spines on its head. Some species have sharp spines fringing the body and tail, which are the only protection the reptile has. In looks it is hideously grotesque, but it is perfectly harmless, and desert dwellers regard the little creature with affection. When alarmed, the horned toad puts its head into the sand, drives hard with its legs, and with a final flick of its tail is buried out of sight in an incredibly short time.

Vincent B. Wilson.



*The natives hurled a barrage of boulders
down the lava slope*

The High Place

*The South Seas guard their secrets well, and Bellow Bill
thought the cannibal rites of long pig were ex-
tinct in the Marquesas Islands—until the
fateful day he came to Hua-vana*

By RALPH R. PERRY

*Author of "Devil Pearls,"
"Virgin Diamonds," etc.*

Novelette—Complete

CHAPTER I.

DAWN.

WITH the slow splendor of a tropic dawn tingeing the sea crimson in the wake of the oars, Bellow Bill Williams rowed to the beach of Hua-vana to learn the recipe of the cocktail which only Michel Poulain, out of all the planters in the South Seas, could mix to its supreme perfection.

All the varying mixtures of fresh coconut juice, white wine, and gin are excellent, but the flavor of Poulain's concoction had lingered on the pearly skipper's palate for many months. Since his schooner was becalmed off the Marquesas Islands, Bill was sure he would pass the day more pleasantly on Poulain's veranda, with an opalescent drink in one huge, tattooed fist, than on his own sun-broiled deck.

Thus casually he injected himself into the death throes of an expiring race, bore the brunt of the final clash



between the white man and the Polynesian, held for a day the balance of power between greed and ambition, treachery and honor; and, in the darkness, amid terrible rites that he had believed were only a memory in the South Seas, came to face the greatest test and temptation of his adventurous life.

For though the sun had barely risen, Poulain was up. At Bill's hail he ran out of his house, a short, fat, swarthy little man of fifty with jet black mus-

taches wide and spiky as the whiskers of a cat. He was fully dressed in white ducks, with a big revolver belted around his fat belly. In fat cheeks coal black eyes swam moistly with excitement.

Behind him, more slowly, advanced his son, Henri Poulain; tall and slender, equally swarthy and dark of eye, but with only thin silky hair like a smudge of soot on his upper lip. Henri was about twenty. Because of his youth he should have shared Poulain's excitement, yet although he also was armed, he was as cool as his father was impassioned.

He stood silent and preoccupied, his eyes avoiding Bill's, while his father burst into incoherent speech.

jabbered Poulain, little black eyes moist with greed to enlist so formidable an ally in his cause. "You will come wiz us, and gain ze victory, *hein?*"

BILL abandoned his dream of a pleasant day packed with many delicious drinks.

"I will if I've got to. But since when have you turned *gendarme*, Poulain?" he rumbled in a voice that had the low, reverberating tone of the bass note of a big organ. Bellow Bill could not whisper. At its softest his voice would carry like the growl of distant thunder, at its loudest it could drown out the roar of a gale.

Six feet and three inches in height,



"Ha! Welcome, *mon ami*! Nevair 'ave you been so welcome! You will come wiz us, *hein?* We march to avenge a crime the most terrible, the most unnatural! Me and my son alone, against every one—every one in ze valley, *m'sieu'*! You are a strong man,"

fifty inches around the chest, scaling two hundred and twenty-five pounds, he was ever welcome to men with trouble on their hands, not only for bull strength, but for quick wit. Broad of forehead and jaw, with dark blue eyes and curly, coppery hair, he was re-

nowned as the keenest and most daring pearling skipper in the South Seas. He loved excitement more than profit, more even than fine cut chewing tobacco, which was his besetting vice.

His only vanity was the tattooing that covered his skin from neck to waist—from the bracelets of rope drawn in pale blue ink, through stars, daggers, and geometrical designs to the full rigged ship that covered his broad back, the dragon in green, yellow, and blue on his chest, and the snake coiled like a belt around his hips.

"I a *gendarme*? But no!" Poulain jabbered passionately. "I am a white man—only zat! Ze *gendarmes* and ze governor 'imself are ze blind fools. I 'ave tol' zem what I know, and zey say, 'It is nozzing!'"

"Listen, *m'sieu*! One of my laborers is gone—vanish'—*pouf! comme ça!* Moloku is here las' night at sunset. He is miss' in ze dark, and he is not yet return. Three, four time in ze las' year my laborers 'ave vanish, and ze governor say 'It is nozzing! Zose men fall over a cliff; zey swim in ze dark, and ze shark get zem!'"

"Well, that's the explanation usually given," Bill remonstrated. "Natives always have been missed from time to time here in the Marquesas, and cliffs and sharks are plenty enough."

"Ah! But now I know zat explanation is ze lie of blind, lazy fools! Look, and you shall judge!"

Poulain darted into his bungalow and returned carrying a *pareu*—a strip of figured cotton cloth such as is used as kilt and loincloth throughout the South Seas.

"Moloku, who is dead, and Mitu, his friend who 'ave found zis, are Pau-motan boys," he explained. "Ze Marquesans do not wear *pareus* of zis pat-

tern. Mitu found it caught in a thorn bush by ze trail. Farther on, by ze top of a cliff, ze bushes are disarrange'. He search at ze bottom, for it is his friend, and more, because ze friend wear a ring of silver zat Mitu wants. Ze body is gone, *m'sieu*. Why?"

Bill shot a stream of tobacco juice neatly over the veranda rail before he spoke.

"The Marquesans haven't lost their taste for long pig—when they get a chance."

"Ah! Yet ze blind fool talk of ze shark, ze fall!" Poulain nodded. "When Mitu brought me ze *pareu*, I could be no longer blind. Nor is zat ze t'ing most serious." The excited voice dropped. "Sixty years ago two t'ousand Marquesans live in zis valley. Now zere are but twenty-five. A few more, maybe, high in ze hills where white men never go. Yet zere are as many breadfruit trees as when zere were two t'ousand, and as many fish in ze sea. Zen why, *m'sieu*?"

"The whalers brought a new disease with them sixty years ago," Bill rumbled. "That took a lot of the two thousand. Then the missionaries stopped them from bathing without clothes, and they got consumption from sleeping in wet cotton *pareus*. That took a lot more. As for the rest—they don't care whether they live or die, so they die. Same thing is going on all over the South Seas."

"And why? Because zey do *not* care!" snarled Poulain, answering his own question. "Ze old dances are forbid'! To drink *kava* is forbid'! Ze war between ze tribes are stop', to put down ze cannibals. All zat ze native wish to do is forbid'. Even opium, for which zey would work, is stop' by law."

"And a damn good thing!" rumbled Bill heartily.

"*Hein?*" contradicted Poulain. "If you had a plantation like mine, you would not say so! *Régardez!* Ten acres of coconut palms, as much as my son and I can tend, when I could plant fifty acres, a hundred, if I could get labor! Yet why should ze native work? His food grow in ze trees; so do his clothes. Sixty years ago he beat ze bark of ze mulberry into tapa cloth. Rum and drugs ze government forbids! Ze dancing, ze fighting that he love, are forbid'. He has sat down and wait' to die, until of two t'ousand zere are left twenty-five! But if ze clock could be turned back, *m'sieu'*, and ze natives live in the old way, soon zat twenty-five would be two t'ousand!"

"Well?"

"It is being done," said Poulain. "Ze old dance, ze old feast—on men, on my laborer Moloku, *m'sieu'!*"

THE jet black eyes swam moistly. The swarthy cheeks were flushed purple-red.

"Prove it!" grunted Bill, watching the son.

Henri stood silent and grim, opposition in every line of his slender figure.

Dramatically Poulain shook out the *pareu* and pointed to a wide reddish-brown stain along the upper hem.

"Moloku and Mitu are Paumotans—strangers," he whispered. "Among ze Marquesans zere are no *pareus* of zis pattern. Look, Bill! Blood has run down Moloku's back, and soak' into ze *pareu*. He was stab' in ze back by a spear and ran for his life along ze dark trail. He swerve, and a thorn bush tear ze *pareu* from his body. Ze pursuers did not notice in ze darkness. He was wounded; zey were gaining. He jump' over ze cliff as other hunted men have done. He hope he would live after ze

fall; he know zose who chase would not jump after him. But—he died. Zey carried him to ze High Place, *m'sieu'*, where ze old feasts were held. Las' night I hear ze sound of drums."

Bill glanced at the son.

"It is true," said Henri. The son spoke better English than the father, grammatical, unaccented. Yet though he substantiated Poulain's fact, his attitude of opposition did not waver, nor did his features relax.

"So! Now we march to punish!" exclaimed Poulain explosively. "You will go wiz us, Bill, *hein?*"

"No excitement equals man-hunting. Sure I'll go, and willing," Bill grinned. "I've heard tales of sixty years ago. A man-eating hell in a paradise, these islands were. Now there aren't any villages a gunboat could shell, nor are there so many natives that they can't avoid a landing party in all this mess of jungle and hills with food growing everywhere. Just because there's only twenty-five now where there used to be two thousand. Sure I'll go; but what do you need me for, Poulain? You're armed. The job is finding the natives that *kai-kai'd* your laborer, not licking them!"

Poulain's eyes rolled.

"Not at all," he announced. "Ze natives are nozzing wizzout ze leader! Ze leader is as well arm' as we—and white!"

Bellow Bill stared in amazement, but the contradiction that was on his lips burst from the son.

"*Non, non, non!*" said Henri. "*Mon père*, I will not permit it! Mynheer Van Tromp is only a tool! The leader is the *moke*, the magician Hanu! When we kill him the drums will speak no more from the High Place!"

"I know what I know!" Poulain insisted. "And thou, my son, would

also accuse Van Tromp had he no daughter named Frieda!"

"And you would not accuse him had he no—" The youngster's jaw snapped shut. From his forehead he wiped beads of cold sweat. "*Mon père!* I beg you, change your mind," he pleaded desperately. "Hanu, the *moke*, loves the old days! He leads his people! Without him Van Tromp could only be a planter like ourselves."

"And wizzout him, Hanu is but a black-faced savage!" Poulain snarled. "Come, Henri! I am older, wiser, and your father. M'sieu' Bill agrees wiz me, *hein?*"

The two Poulains glared at each other, one hot, one cold, both passionately determined. Between them was deadlock. Each left the decision to Bellow Bill.

CHAPTER II.

FORENOON.

"**W**HERE are these two guys?" Bill boomed. "Van Tromp and his daughter I've heard of. He's got the big plantation next to yours. Where's Hanu? In the bush?"

"He is Van Tromp's overseer. At this hour he also will be at the plantation," replied Henri gravely.

"Then what's bothering you two?" Bill paused in the hope that either the father or the son would explain. Neither said a word. The pearler shrugged. Convinced that a crime had been committed, he did not care whether he was to capture a white man or a brown. He accepted a revolver from Poulain, and the three set out in single file, the chubby little planter in the lead.

While they were on Poulain's land they moved through a typical South

Sea plantation—rows of coco palms, each protected against the rats by a band of tin around the trunk, and with the undergrowth partially cleared away. As soon as they crossed Van Tromp's line, however, the cultivation changed markedly, and for the better.

Not a weed grew under Van Tromp's palms, and in addition to these there were mangos, limes, and bread-fruit; oranges and pawpaws, candle-nuts, bananas, and alligator pears. Van Tromp grew on his own land everything he needed to live like a tropic prince, and his plantation, which Bill knew was fully four times the size of his neighbor's, exported copra, honey, vanilla and fruit in an amount that made the Dutchman's income almost princely.

The explanation was that he alone was able to make the Marquesan natives cultivate his fields day in and day out. The startlingly well-kept land offered silent corroboration of Poulain's accusation. All the planters offered money, and failed to obtain a month's work out of the natives in a year. Van Tromp evidently held out other inducements.

That the Dutchman himself was a cannibal was unthinkable, but that ambition and greed drove him to pander to the dearest and most secret vice of the natives was quite possible.

If he were doing so, the aid of a Marquesan *moke*, or magician-priest, would be essential. Which of the two was the more guilty of corrupting the natives seemed to Bellow Bill a matter of splitting hairs. He wondered that the Poulains should quarrel over the point—and what thing it was that the father wanted, which had led him to accuse Van Tromp to the exclusion of the *moke*, and which Henri, even in anger, had refused to mention.

Poulain began to walk more cautiously. He entered a thicket of young coffee shrubs whose foliage, higher than Bill's head, formed a dense screen. Dropping on his hands and knees, he wormed his way forward. At the edge of the thicket he stopped and motioned Bill to crawl alongside him. Peering through the foliage, the pearler found himself within ten yards of Van Tromp's veranda. The Dutchman himself was in plain view, talking to a native.

Both were remarkable men. At a glance Bill understood why his help had been enlisted. Van Tromp sat like a boulder poised at the edge of a cliff. He was perfectly bald—a smooth white scalp and a broad white face relieved by a scanty mustache and eyebrows of the palest yellow. He was enormously broad and thick of shoulder, chest, and neck, but no more fat than some bulging, squat, pale-colored stone. Even seated he was menacing.

Facing him across a light wicker breakfast table stood a brown giant. Subconsciously Bill noted a height scarcely less than six and a half feet and a superbly muscled torso and arms, for his eyes returned again and again to the face. The entire countenance was tattooed a sooty black. Only the eyes seemed alive.

"Hanu!" Poulain whispered.

BILL nodded. The two were talking, but too low for him to catch a word. He nudged Poulain, and burst through the screen of foliage, hand on gun, crossing the open space too rapidly for Hanu to escape or Van Tromp to arm himself.

Both started. Van Tromp leaned forward and spoke quickly to the native, his body covering the table top. As he resumed his seat he moved to

one side a sun helmet that was on the table, and then waited, with folded arms. Hanu followed his example.

Bill walked to the table, grinned when he noticed that the sun helmet now hid a revolver, and waited for Poulain to speak. The spike-mustached little Frenchman was no coward; he pushed by Bill.

"One of my men is gone. You 'ave kill' 'im!" he snarled into Van Tromp's face.

The Dutchman ignored him. "Who are you?" he demanded of Bill.

"Bill Williams. Pearling skipper."

"Of Bellow Bill every one has heard. You are a fair man," said Van Tromp. Slowly, with a thick arm and a huge white hand steady as marble, he pointed at Poulain.

"That one drools with jealousy. See?" There was indeed a trickle of saliva from the corner of Poulain's mouth. "He and I took land together fifteen years ago. I have prospered; he has not."

Van Tromp's voice was leisurely, thick, and insulting. "Therefore, he accuses me of crimes to the governor, to everybody. I am tired of it. Of a laborer that is missing I know nothing. Hanu, my foreman, knows nothing. That is all. I will not be shouted at or threatened. If Monsieur Poulain cannot keep his labor I am— No!" Van Tromp interrupted himself, "I am *not* sorry."

"The man was murdered. There is proof," Bill rumbled.

"*Ach*, so?" There was surprise in the voice. The pale blue eyes flickered. "Then we must talk. It is early, sir," Van Tromp went on more graciously; "perhaps you have not eaten?"

"Frieda!" he shouted. "Clear the table and bring three more plates for my guests!" He heaved himself out of

his chair and gestured toward some long cane chairs at the opposite end of the veranda. "Come, gentlemen! Coffee before pistols, if you please!" he commanded.

A girl appeared in the doorway. She was tall, about seventeen, with pale golden hair coiled around her head in two braids, and white with an anxiety or terror that Bill could readily understand. Though the Poulains were behind his back he could sense their hot anger and cold purpose, and that Van Tromp should inject his daughter into such a scene annoyed him. The Dutchman's subterfuge, moreover, was too obvious. Bill lifted the sun helmet aside.

Under it, beside the revolver, was a silver ring.

"Moloku's!" snapped Henri, brief and sharp.

Like lightning Hanu snatched up the ring. Bill caught the brown wrist, held it despite a lunge to escape that flung him off balance. Hanu was as strong or stronger than he. Bill clinched. The two staggered down the veranda, Bill unable to set himself for a blow, Hanu unable to pull away.

A gun roared in Bill's ear, searing the back of his neck with powder. The bullet fanned his cheek. To protect himself he let Hanu go, whirled, and dived at the knees of the man who had fired. Too late he saw that the man was Henri! Bill's tackle brought the young Frenchman down with stunning force. Before either could recover, Hanu had vaulted the veranda rail and dodged nimbly around the corner of the house.

To follow a native into the bush was hopeless. Bill did not attempt it. Instead he held Henri firmly, wondering whether the bullet had been intended for him, or had been fired in ungov-

ernable excitement at two interlocked, struggling men.

BEFORE him was another puzzle. Poulain, with revolver half drawn, glared at Van Tromp, whose hand was closed about the revolver on the table. The Frenchman's lips were drawing back from his teeth. The Dutchman was paler than before, and of the two the more dangerous. Both were on the point of murder.

"None o' that!" Bill growled. Though they paid no attention, he decided they would not shoot, since they had not, and turned to Henri, who blinked at him from the veranda floor and ignored the two behind him.

"Trying to kill me?" Bill growled.

"You should have let me shoot again, *m'sieu'*. I would not have hit you." Henri was icy cool.

"You took a long chance!"

"Could I have shot Hanu through your body I would have done it!"

"Yeah!" Bill rumbled, rubbing his powder-burned neck. "Come clean now, youngster! What are you trying to stop by killing Hanu? Something more than the eating of long pig!"

"I cannot say." Under the silky mustache that was like a smear of soot his mouth set hard. "I cannot, you understand?" he pleaded. "I—you need not fear I will shoot you in the back!"

"Unless you gain by it. You don't seem to care much whether your father gets plugged," said Bill roughly, and added in a booming voice:

"Well, Mynheer Van Tromp! So your foreman Hanu knew nothing about it, hey? How'd that ring get under your hat?"

The Dutchman let go of his revolver and folded his arms.

"I lied," he said without apology.

"For a foreman like Hanu, who can make a plantation like mine, I would do more than lie. But I have been accused before, by him." The bald head nodded at Poulain.

"Hanu came to me this morning," he went on, "and said that he had found a body at the foot of a cliff, from which he took the ring. What he had done with the body I did not ask, or care. It is not my business. But when I saw you armed, I knew what would be said. I acted to protect my foreman from accusations that are false. If they are not false, I apologize, even to Monsieur Poulain. What is more, to prove that I am not false, as I am accused, I will lead you to Hanu's hiding place, shoot him myself. But only if you have proof."

Briefly Bill explained about the bloodstained *pareu*. Van Tromp listened in silence, shrugged, and walked without a word into his bungalow.

"Where are you going?" Bill called suspiciously.

The bald head reappeared. "The march will be long, we will need food. I fear the shot alarmed my daughter, and go to explain. It will take less than a minute," Van Tromp explained with a sarcastic smile that seemed to jeer at Bill for his suspicions.

"Shall I follow him? I don't like this," Bill muttered.

Both the Poulains shook their heads.

"If he will go into ze bush wiz us, it is all I ask," said the father.

"He can lead us to Hanu's *paepac*—if he will," added the son.

NEVERTHELESS Bill did not like the absence. Van Tromp's confession and his proposed vengeance showed a callous indifference to the lives of others that marked him as a dangerous man. Bill knew

the type that begins by not caring whether men are killed or not, and ends by preferring them dead. That Van Tromp was ignorant of the lengths to which Hanu had gone was possible. That he was fully cognizant of them was equally likely. To follow, however, would merely send the planter straight to his daughter. Nothing would be accomplished.

Had Bill been able to follow unseen his worst suspicions would have been confirmed. Van Tromp gave his daughter a curt order to bring food, and walked to the rear door of his house. His shoulders blocked the doorway. To any one spying on him from the front of the house he would have seemed to do no more than stare across the thicket of blooming plants that grew waist-deep to the steps, yet he had scarcely appeared when Hanu squirmed through the tangled mass of white spider lilies to the feet of his employer.

"The white men know all," Van Tromp whispered in Marquesan. "Gather your warriors and give them coconut brandy to increase their courage. I will guide the white men into the gorge on the trail to Tetio."

"That is near Pekia, the High Place," Hanu whispered.

"The less distance to carry them. They must not come back," growled Van Tromp, and walked back to his guests.

Hanu squirmed through the spider lilies into a thicket of young pandanus, where two natives joined him. The *moke's* eyes gleamed in the black, tattooed face.

"Fekei, are you brave?" he challenged the larger of the two, whose chest and face were tattooed in patterns of red and green. "The Bald Pig tells me to give you brandy, but

there will be more brandy when the Bald Pig also is borne to the High Place and drops into the pit."

"I am brave," said Fekei stolidly.

The *moke* rocked to and fro on his heels, and though he whispered, his voice had the rise and fall of a chant:

"Brandy and death are the white gifts; before them we vanish like the mist before the sun. Once our people was great, but now the rain beats on the bare stones of the *paepacs* where the roofs have fallen in rot. The bread-fruit will not grow on the coconut palm, nor will the white men and we live on the same land. Better to live in the hills where the big ships cannot throw the bullets that bang and the feet of the grunting soldiers make more noise than the rain. Once more we shall kindle the fires of the High Place and dance the dances my fathers have danced for eight and nine generations that I can name! You are brave, Fekei?"

"I am brave."

"Then tell the warriors to gather at the gorge on the trail to Tetio. Tell them to bring slings, and stones made smooth by rubbing!"

CHAPTER III.

MIDDAY.

VAN TROMP allowed only a hasty breakfast, stuck his revolver in his pocket, and led the way into the brush. Bellow Bill, Henri, and Poulain followed in order. From the start the path climbed steadily toward the jagged lava ramparts of the hills, and within an hour the four were threading their way through vegetation that had reverted to wilderness.

Scents weighted the air. Hundreds,

of flowers of every color from crimson to violet were all around, and through the tangle of palm and fern great creepers coiled like serpents. Yet save for birds and insects the jungle seemed lifeless. The four white men had plunged into an abandoned world.

Occasionally they passed a native *paepac*—the broad platform of flat and heavy stones upon which all Marquesan houses are built—but the last vestige of the houses had rotted into dust decades ago. The hum of insects was oppressive, worse than silence.

Bill, who was familiar with the sounds of a tropical jungle, and who had been walking with the softness of a big cat, curly head cocked to one side, touched Van Tromp's shoulder abruptly.

"We're being followed. By some one that's careless. Twice I've heard a stone roll."

"Who would follow, and what of it?" growled the Dutchman. "At my house is only Frieda. She would carry warning to no one. My hands are scattered over the plantation. If one of them should have heard the shot and sought to warn Hanu he could not pass us on the trail."

"Your plantation hands could easily be in the hills already, after last night's—pastime," Bill rumbled. "We're followed, I tell you. I'm going to step aside into the bush while you go on, and find out by whom, and why."

"*Mais non! Ze haste is mos' necessaire!*" Poulain objected.

Van Tromp agreed. He explained that he wanted to reach Hanu's *paepac*, which was high in the hills, so quickly that the *moke* would believe his master had come to warn him. When they reached the spot the other three would hide in the brush where they

could cover Van Tromp as he went forward. Hanu, seeing his master alone, would not try to escape. Van Tromp would shoot him down at sight. By a look Bill questioned Henri.

"I do not wish to be alone with these two, *m'sieu'*," was the answer.

Bill shrugged, and the four men went on. Two hours passed. The heat and the steady climb made them all pant with exertion.

The sun was vertical when the path emerged on the lip of a chasm of black lava that held the heat like an oven. To right and left stretched a barrier of cliffs, which seemed to have been wrenched apart by an earthquake. The chasm cut through the cliffs and the slope leading up to them as though the lava had been gashed by a gigantic ax while still pasty.

"The Marquesans had a fort at both ends of this gorge in the old days," Van Tromp grunted, scrambling down a declivity so steep he was compelled to use his hands. "In 1812 they stopped your American Captain Porter and thirty-five sailors armed with muskets here for a day and a night—stopped them with nothing but spears and stones."

"Yeah?" Bill grunted. The rumble of a rolling stone made him look back up the slope. "Hi! Look out!" he roared—too late.

A boulder as big as his head hurtled down the slope like a spent cannon ball. Poulain leaped aside. Henri, waiting for his father to be safe before he dodged himself, was struck. He cried out. His falling body swept Bill's legs from beneath him, and brought down Van Tromp. They rolled to the foot of the slope in a shower of small stones. Down upon them hurtled a second boulder.

Bill could only flatten himself to the

lava. By luck the boulder rushed over his head. A third followed instantly—missing him by a yard. He jerked out his revolver, and fired at random.

Van Tromp gave a strangled cry of rage and terror and ran down the valley. Bill leaped up. Henri struggled onto his knees, turned dead white, and toppled over in a faint as he attempted to stand. Bill gathered him up in one arm and ran. Poulain, running beside him, gasped and swore.

A fourth boulder sped after them with the rumble of an oncoming freight train, passed to one side, and knocked splinters of stone from the black wall of the chasm. In that broadest part of the gorge Van Tromp stopped, so pale of face that Bill absolved him from any collusion in the attack. He also had been in the path of the stones. That only one of the four had been hurt was sheer chance.

"ONE native could have done that," Bill snapped. "How's the other end of this damned trap you've put us in?"

"Worse," Van Tromp grunted, and wiped the sweat from his bald head. "I do not understand—*ach*, no! I do not understand," he added, so obviously bewildered that Bill shook him violently by the shoulder.

From the edge of the chasm a round stone as big as Bill's fist hummed through the air, missing him by a yard, and smashed against the rocks with a force that showered him with lava chips. Half a dozen more, thrown from different points, banished the hope that the attack had been the work of Hanu alone.

Bill caught a glimpse of a brown arm whirling a sling. He fired, uselessly. The aim of the stones was deadly, shelter in that bare lava chasm

almost non-existent. Pursued by stones he carried Henri to a shallow cave that offered some protection, shoved his revolver with its four remaining cartridges into his belt, and stuffed a handful of fine cut into his mouth.

The slung stones could be dodged, though they traveled with double the speed of a rock thrown by hand.

"Hit the nigger and you get a good cigar!" Bill rumbled. From the angles at which the stones were thrown he judged the number of assailants. There were only seven. Not heavy odds if the white men could get on level ground.

"Look after your kid. His ankle's broken," Bill ordered Poulain. "As to you, Van Tromp—you got us into this, so you'll get us out. If we stay here they'll bean us sure."

"I t'ink we shoot him! 'E 'as betray' us! We should kill him," Poulain snarled, pawing for his revolver.

"Like hell! Waste as big a target for rocks as he is?" Bill snorted. "Rush that hill, Dutchie! I'm right at your heels with a gat."

Van Tromp charged the slope willingly. Stones hummed around the two. They could glimpse the head and shoulders of the native whirling the sling as the missile was thrown, but so briefly that a shot would have been a waste of cartridges. The Marquesans, in turn, dared not expose themselves long enough to take effective aim. Bill kept his head down and climbed. A yard in advance Van Tromp used the same tactics.

They were halfway to the crest, where the path narrowed, when the first boulder descended upon them. Both sprang aside, but Bill, forced to stand erect, was struck in the chest by a sling-stone that tumbled him to the bottom. Van Tromp, with stones fly-

ing all around him, scrambled to the lip of the chasm and disappeared.

Bill's chest felt as though it had stopped the kick of a mule, but he scrambled upward again to lend the Dutchman a hand. He expected revolver shots, shouts, a cessation of the stones as Van Tromp's revolver cleared the crest of enemies. Instead there was nothing. Not one shot, even. It was as though Van Tromp had been clubbed over the head the instant he reached level ground; and though Bill could not believe that, there was no slackening in the stone barrage. A hurtling boulder swept him from the path. He rolled down the slope, starting a small avalanche. In the fall his head struck against the stone base of the gorge, and darkness engulfed him.

He came to with Poulain tugging him by the shoulder. Stones caromed around both; the fat little Frenchman, puffing and panting, had managed to drag Bill halfway up the cave. The pearler made the rest of the distance on his own feet and dropped against the cave wall. Poulain squatted opposite.

"'E 'as trick' us, Bill," he said bitterly. "I should 'ave shot him—long ago, at ze bungalow."

"And we'd be a lot better off!" jeered the pearler. "Bullets would be easier to face than them damn rocks. The bowlders get you if you stick in the path, and if you leave it they pop you off with slings." Bill winced as a well-aimed missile flung bits of stone in his face, and packed his mouth with fine cut.

"**W**HY are you so hell-fired anxious to bump off Van Tromp, anyway?" Bill demanded.

The moist black eyes narrowed.

"I 'ate him!" Poulain snarled—

which gave Bill no enlightenment whatever. He spat.

"Well, I guess the natives got him, so forget it," he advised. "What now? We'll fry on these rocks in another hour. There isn't a canteen of water in the gang."

"*Oui*," agreed Poulain.

"Yes, hell! I was thirsty when I came ashore! If we do sit here, safe and suffering, are any white men apt to come along and drive these natives off?"

"Impossible. Zere are not a dozen whites on ze whole islan'. From here to my plantation is four hours' march, from zere to ze governor, three hours more, by lan' or boat."

"Then I won't fry like a pancake on these hot rocks," Bill decided, and raising his voice to the utmost, belated:

"Ahoy, Hanu! Damn you, what do you want?"

No more stones were slung, but for fully five minutes there was no other sign that Bill's stentorian shout had been heard. Then a black head and a jet black tattooed face peered over the rim of the chasm.

"Capsize gun belong you!" Hanu shouted.

Bill promptly tossed his pistol away.

"*Nom d'un nom!* You would not surrender?" Poulain remonstrated.

The pearler shook his head, but took the two other revolvers and tossed them after his own.

"If we can't get up, we got to get them to come down," he explained in his softest tone. "Buck up, man! I've been captured by natives before. They're in no hurry to kill prisoners—though I guess they scragged Van Tromp at sight."

"*Non!* 'E is zere leader!" spat Poulain.

Both Bill and he were partly wrong, and partly right. Van Tromp lay in the brush at the head of the gorge, surrounded by natives, bruised, raging but unharmed, and, in his own opinion, in command.

The rock that had been rolled upon him as well as the others had appalled him. Knowing Hanu to be determined and quick-witted, he had expected the natives to hold both ends of the gorge until he could persuade the trapped white men to surrender. The premature attack which risked his own life infuriated him, and it was in good earnest that he had stormed the slope ahead of Bellow Bill.

As he stepped onto the level ground a native rushed at him, swinging a *u'u*, or war club of ironwood. Van Tromp leveled his gun, hesitating to shoot one of his own laborers, thinking that liquor and excitement had sent the native into a frenzy. The Marquesan charged on straight at the revolver, and Van Tromp was about to fire when Hanu dashed from the bushes and gathered the native into his huge arms.

"Hold the fool still," Van Tromp snarled. "Hanu—you dog! You damn near killed me!"

"Men no belong me," said Hanu grimly, meaning that he could not control them.

"Well, I can! Now I'm here, we'll do what you should have done in the first place. Tell them to throw away their guns. Send down one man to tie them up. Send him!" Van Tromp growled malevolently, pointing at the man who had threatened him with the *u'u*.

Bellow Bill had hardly tossed away his revolver, therefore, when a Marquesan picked his way down the steep trail and edged cautiously toward the weapons. He carried a war club, and

was evidently afraid of the three whites. Bill, however, stood with hands in pockets. He allowed the native to pick up the revolvers. More confidently the man advanced. Not until he was within arm's length did the pearler act. One sudden swing from his hip stretched the native senseless. Bill knelt on his back and bound him hand and foot with his own cord, picked up Henri's revolver, which had not been discharged, and holding the bound man before him for a shield, advanced toward the slope down which he had twice been tumbled.

"Carry Henri up when I'm over the top," he roared cheerfully at Poulain.

BY using his captive as a shield against the sling-stones, Bill could avoid the depressed path down which the bowlders trundled like balls down an alley. Though he found it hard to climb with a man in his arms, his strength made the feat possible, and the fear of injuring their own fellow seemed to paralyze Hanu and his men. Not a stone was hurled as Bill picked his way to the crest. He emerged on a bare shelf of rock, facing the jungle. Not a man was in sight. Bill was about to shout to Poulain in triumph when a revolver spat from the midst of a thorn bush directly in front. The native he held gave a convulsive quiver as the bullet struck, and went limp.

"The next is yours, sailor," snarled Van Tromp's voice. The thin powder smoke drifted away from the bush.

To rush was futile. Bill could see nothing to shoot at. He let the dead native fall and tossed his revolver down. Poulain, who came panting upward with Henri over his shoulder, was in no shape to fight. He dropped his weapon at Van Tromp's order.

"Guess you were right, Poulain," Bill rumbled. "We should have killed him while we had the chance, but I was believing Henri more than you, d'you see?"

A native squirmed through the bushes and bound the arms of the three with strips of coconut fiber. Not until they were secure did Van Tromp appear. His eyes glittered foolishly, and on the dead white face was a ghastly, mad expression of triumph. As he walked toward his captive, Hanu, in bare feet slipped noiselessly behind him.

A war club rose and fell on the bald head. Van Tromp pitched forward. Hanu squatted beside the unconscious body and bound his arms like those of the others.

"One, two, three, four, five," the *moke* counted with satisfaction.

Bellow Bill shifted his quid. The fifth was the native shot by Van Tromp.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTERNOON.

THE soot-black face of the *moke* concealed his emotions, but the other natives, of whom there were five, were awed and uneasy because of their own success. They strutted and waved their war clubs of polished iron-wood, boasted to each other of their part in the victory; and yet Bellow Bill was amused to observe that boasts and threats alike were spoken at a little distance from the prisoners, instead of being snarled into their faces. Like hunters who have captured a lion, the Marquesans feared their prisoners even in bonds.

Bill figured that he had been in worse situations, notably when he had been

in the power of the Borneo bushmen. Those fuzzy-headed blacks had been utterly savage, whereas, the Marquesans were theoretically Christianized and partly civilized. He lay quiet and alert, waiting for the least opportunity.

The behavior of his companions was otherwise. Poulain, after writhing in his bonds, called to Hanu again and again. Though the *moke* paid no attention, the Frenchman persisted in his effort to talk or negotiate. Van Tromp, after recovering consciousness, lay with his pale face frozen in a snarl. Unreasonable rage glittered in the little blue eyes; he spoke neither to the white men nor the natives.

Henri's face was drawn with the pain of the broken leg, but his coolness and air of detachment from his father and his father's enterprises was intensified.

"What's wrong with you and your old man?" Bill rumbled.

"That does not matter now. It is ended, we are finished," Henri answered precisely.

"Don't be dumb!" Bill boomed. Every one looked in his direction, and he grinned at them all. Like many sailors, he wore his jackknife on a lanyard around his waist instead of in his pocket, and the native who had searched him had missed it. Knowing the carrying quality of his own voice, he dared not whisper the information to Henri, but turned his back in the hope that the other would notice the bulge under the waistband of his trousers.

"*Ah! Bien!*" Henri whispered, and squirmed back to back with the big pearler.

Hanu, however, unknowingly forestalled the use of the steel. He grunted an order. Fekei lifted Henri on his

back, two others slung the dead native over a pole, while the other four guarded the white men able to walk. For a half mile the party took the back trail, and then branched off to the left and began to climb another shoulder of the lava cliffs. They halted at last in an open space surrounded by dense undergrowth at the foot of the steep slope.

The natives laid the prisoners in a row like cordwood, and then sprawled at their ease. Hanu put his fingers in his mouth and whistled piercingly. He listened—and suddenly cocked his ear in the direction from which the party had come. He scowled and muttered to his men—who shook their heads. They had heard nothing. Neither had Bill. On the contrary, Fekei pointed up the hillside, and in a moment the sound of rustling undergrowth was unmistakable.

An old man whose tattooing had turned from blue to a pale greenish yellow with the years stepped into the open space accompanied by a handsome Marquesan girl. The man bore food—*poi poi*, bananas, a little roast pork. The girl carried a bowl and a dish of grated root which resembled shredded cabbage. Squatting, she commenced to prepare *kava*—chewing the grated root that the ferment in the saliva might liberate the narcotic element.

Bellow Bill nudged Henri gleefully. Opportunity was coming. *Kava* combines the effects of alcohol and opium. It intoxicates and induces visions. Since its drinking is prohibited by law, the Marquesans are no longer accustomed to its effect.

THE preparation of the draft was slow. The sun was declining when the root was prepared. Hanu poured milk of green coconuts on the mass of masticated root, knead-

ed it between his powerful hands, and poured the juice into another bowl.

"*U haanoho ia te kai; a tapapa is te kai!*" he intoned. "Come to the food; the food is prepared."

A drinking bowl made of a coconut shell circulated swiftly from hand to hand. Each native tossed off two drafts of the decoction, and fell upon the *poi poi* and the meat, cramming down the food in handfuls. In a deep voice Hanu began to chant a long tale of his forefathers and the great victory of the Typees over the tribe of Haana, while the five warriors, the old man, and the girl, who had drunk and eaten after the rest, sprawled with chin on chest and eyes dull. Henri commenced to fumble at Bill's waist.

"Hanu's head is of iron," he whispered apprehensively. "The rest are drunk."

Whether the *moke* would have noticed the stirring among his prisoners was never learned. In the undergrowth leaves rustled. The ink black face jerked upward. Over the circle of sprawling natives leaped—to Bill's consternation—Frieda.

In her hand was an open knife. She flung herself at her father, and slashed through the fibers binding ankles and wrists. Hanu lunged at her. She screamed aloud, but instead of dodging aside, she jumped straight at his face, scratching and kicking. He held her, but her frantic struggles occupied him for a moment—long enough for Van Tromp to heave himself to knees, to his feet, and then to plunge into the bushes. Hanu plucked Frieda away from him as a man might throw aside a scratching cat, tossed her to Fekei, caught up an ironwood *u'u* and gave chase. Two of the natives followed; the remainder could rise, but were not yet able to run.

Bill swore at the top of his voice, and recklessly thrust out his hands for Henri to cut. A native staggered toward him. Drawing back both bound feet, Bill landed a kick that tumbled the man end over end. The ropes around his wrists parted. He caught the knife and slashed his ankles free. A single blow knocked Fekei down. Bill caught Frieda, threw her at the bushes.

"Run!" he shouted. Fekei had found a war club, and so had the other natives; as they staggered toward him Bill plunged after the girl. He crashed through the tangle of brush and vines like a bull, unable to see six feet before him, trying by ear and by the trail to overtake the girl. He failed. A thorn bush barred his path. He passed it on the right and knew, too late, that he should have taken the opposite side. A native was close behind. Bill could not go back, and at that moment a scream told him that Frieda had been overtaken.

The pearler crouched in his tracks. The native behind almost tripped over him, swung a wild blow with the *u'u*. Bill rose inside its sweep and seized the brown throat. He shook the man till his head wobbled, threw him down, and finished him with his own war club.

Hanu was whistling shrilly, blast after blast. The Marquesan girl was screaming. From Frieda, not another sound. The jungle itself was silent, save for the distant rustle of men starting toward Hanu, who was collecting his forces—a bit of generalship that made Bill swear. One by one he could overpower them. All five together—he left the old man and girl out—were formidable. They had clubs, and the revolvers, in case they were able to shoot. Henri could not run.

Retreat came hard to Bill, but he

forced himself to circle in the direction that Van Tromp had taken. He despised the man for abandoning a daughter clever enough to follow them since the moment they had left the plantation—for the noise both he and Hanu had heard must have been made by Frieda. She was brave to sacrifice her own liberty for his. Van Tromp might be hog, skunk, and poltroon, but he was a man of tremendous strength, and he and Bill together might attack Hanu on something like even terms.

Bill swung the *u'u*. He liked its balance. Three feet long, paddle-shaped, sharp-edged, of wood heavy as ebony and so hard he could not dent it with his thumbnail, it was a combination of ax and sword. One blow had killed the Marquesan.

Van Tromp could have the jack-knife that Bill had carried away in his excitement. One to five was long odds. Two to five was—fair. He and the Dutchman would attack the natives before the fumes of the *kava* wore off. If the stuff was like alcohol, the natives would already be shocked almost to sobriety.

THOUGH he was seeking Van Tromp, it was soon evident that the latter was making no effort to join him. Bill could hear Hanu snarling at his men, but not another sound. As rapidly as possible the pearler wormed his way through the jungle until he intercepted Van Tromp's trail, which he followed for nearly a quarter of a mile.

Far beyond the spot where Hanu had turned back, Bill found the Dutchman, glowering and at bay, his back against a vertical wall of lava, a jagged stone in his hand.

"Chuck away that rock, Van," Bill grinned cheerfully. "I'll cut you a

club. That's some daughter you got. Ought to be a boy. Let's go get her!"

The Dutchman's bald head sank into huge shoulders. More than ever he stood like a boulder tottering for a mad rush. Beneath the pale yellow eyebrows the pale blue eyes glittered.

"And afterward?" he growled.

Bill stared. The violence and unexpectedness of the question, the glitter of the pale blue eyes warned him he had to deal with a man beside himself with rage, disappointment, or an emotion less allied to reason than these.

"You tell me what to do, you that brought the Poulains and found the ring," pursued Van Tromp hoarsely. "Afterward, you go to sea, but I sit on my veranda and watch the vines swallow my orchards. Fifteen years I have built, you meddler! Only I can make this island blossom like a garden, only I can ship copra by the schooner load—and you would make me like all the others! Poulain and I bought land together! Look at him, now, and at me! He says the natives will not work, but I"—still gripping the jagged stone, Van Tromp pounded himself on the chest—"I found the secret. I am a great man, a rich man! I can control the natives. A little later—by dawn tomorrow—they will obey me!"

"D'ye know what you're saying?"

"That some will not see the dawn? Enemies!" Van Tromp snarled. "Yes, I know, meddler! More bodies than you believe will hang from the banyan tree at the High Place! That is the price. Before now I have paid it. What if these are white? The Poulains? They envy me! Frieda? She followed to warn you, knowing what I whispered to Hanu, helping you whose pistol was against my back! Though Hanu will not harm her! He dare not."

"You're mad," Bill muttered.

Horribly the planter glared at him. "They watched me. They reported me to the governor—come to me, the yellow hair hanging to the waist, to pray that I stop, that I let the ground be choked with weeds," he mouthed. In the grip of his monomania he confused acts performed by Frieda and the Poulains.

Bill's face hardened. He had lived among rough men who did not let a life stand between them and their goal, but the thought of Frieda pleading with her father and being abandoned by him was proof of an insanity awful in its purposefulness and cunning.

"They will hinder me no more," said Van Tromp. "By to-morrow there will only be you!"

Bill read the purpose in the insane eyes. He ducked. The stone that Van Tromp hurled at his head missed. With a yell that rang through the jungle the Dutchman rushed forward, caught Bill's war club, and flung himself backward to wrench it from the pearler's grip.

Muscles loose, Bill let himself be jerked from his feet, thereby keeping both hands on the weapon. He was on the defensive. He wanted to knock sense back into Van Tromp's skull, but though he was on top as they fell, the latter changed the wrestle into a death grapple.

THE Dutchman's knee jabbed Bill in the groin. Nausea all but mastered Bill. His fingers slipped on the polished ironwood. His palms seemed to run sweat. He clung while Van Tromp's boots battered his shoulders and face. As the effects of the disabling blow passed he hauled himself forward along the club until he lay upon it and upon Van Tromp.

The latter rolled over, carrying Bill underneath. With the pearler flat on his back, Van Tromp twisted the club crosswise, tugging to push it up over Bill's chest and press it into his throat. Bill heaved to dislodge him, and failed. The club, however, did not move. In Van Tromp's throat the sinews stood out like oak roots; his eyes bulged, but in strength of arm and fingers Bill matched him. With a snarl he bent to bite Bill's fingers.

Though the pearler had never wrestled for a cane, he had watched Japanese divers wrestle on his schooner, had seen what a fall a man who yields suddenly in a test of strength can give his adversary.

As teeth gnawed his knuckles he relaxed. The club shot over his head and Van Tromp's whole body followed it. With an upward thrust of legs and back Bill turned them both in a somersault, shifting both hands to the handle of the club as they whirled, and throwing all his strength into a jerk as they crashed against the ground.

The sharp club edge cut through Van Tromp's fingers. Bill snatched the club from beneath the Dutchman's body and jabbed the paddle-shaped blade at the base of the bald skull—a six-inch blow backed by the weight of chest and shoulders.

The Dutchman's thick body jerked, and then lay still. Bill rose. The other remained in the circle of broken bushes like a bundle of clothes, flattened, and formless, with a thin red wound where the thick neck joined the bald skull. He was dead.

"Gone native," Bill panted. "God—how he had! He had this coming."

He sucked the blood from his bitten finger and stepped into the jungle. Since he must fight alone, he hoped that Hanu would come to investigate

the maddened yell with which Van Tromp had launched the attack.

CHAPTER V.

TWILIGHT.

FOR the predicament in which he was involved, Bill blamed himself.

Van Tromp had spoken the truth in one particular: Bill had meddled when he should have led. Because he had relished the idea of a chase into the jungle, he had not taken Poulain's accusations at their face value, and thereby compelled Frieda, who knew the facts in all their horror, to follow—though to rescue, not betray, her father. In that respect Van Tromp had been deceived by his monomania.

Well—so be it. Bill's shoulders were broad enough to bear plenty of responsibility. Though he was involved in a game more sinister than he had believed, he was neither worried nor disturbed. Long contact with Polynesians had convinced him that the brown men could not exhibit steadfastness of purpose unless a white man was leading or secretly supporting them. Without Van Tromp, Hanu was only a native. He—and even more likely, the men with him—would release their prisoners and take to the hills when they discovered their patron was dead.

Bill, however, had never encountered a native of Hanu's fiber, and because Henri's broken leg made rescue border on the impossible, he overlooked the fact that Hanu had already knocked his boss over the head. Bill discovered his error promptly.

Step by step he retraced the trail to the scene of the *kava* drinking. The sun was setting. Under the jungle foliage the light had changed from green to gray, and from the silence

ahead Bill feared that his enemies had moved on. Of the noise he made himself he was careless, though as he came close he abandoned the trail and pushed through the dense brush in order to flank any possible ambush. When he was able to see the clearing, however, he found all five of the natives bunched in the center. Hanu held a revolver. He sighted and fired.

The bullet ripped a yard over Bill's head. The pearler froze in his tracks, grinning at this evidence of bad marksmanship. The war clubs of the five were more threatening than revolvers in the hands of a man who had probably never discharged a short gun before, for the Marquesans were drawn up in line, and stood like soldiers, waiting for orders. It was marvelous discipline for primitive warriors. Poulain, Henri, and Frieda lay on the grass beside them, bound. The old man and the girl had vanished. They were harmless in any event.

With a frown at the revolver, Hanu tried a second shot, aiming this time almost at the roots of the bushes. Again he missed badly, but Bill instantly changed his own tactics to meet the defensive attitude of the natives.

He cried out—a roaring, echoing yell of mingled pain and fear, simulating a mortal wound. Throwing himself backward, he kicked and thrashed until the bushes swayed violently, then began to crawl away—slowly, as though he were creeping off to die, yet taking care that he made commotion enough to be followed easily. It was the old trick of the bird that thrashes on the ground just beyond the hunter's reach and leads him away from the nest.

The device succeeded in that the Marquesans followed—but not with the reckless triumph for which Bill

hoped. Step by step and shoulder to shoulder, all five plowed through the brush, never faster than a walk, and never breaking rank, though Bill groaned with the utmost realism not five yards in advance. When he had retreated less than twenty feet the natives stopped and muttered in undertones. Bill overheard Hanu's order:

"Go back!"

ABANDONING the hope of separating his enemies, Bill changed his tactics again. On hands and knees, with his utmost speed and bushcraft, he crawled toward the little open space. Hanu's retreat was as deliberate as his advance had been. The pearler was able to get back first. Swiftly, in silence, he crawled into the open, finger on lips to prevent the prisoners from greeting him with a shout. In Henri's hands he pressed his jack-knife, dragged Poulain and Frieda where their bonds could be reached, and then charged into the brush to meet the returning natives.

Like a bull he broke through the line. Hanu dodged the blow Bill swung at his head. With a second swing of his club the pearler stretched a native on the ground, and turned, striking right and left. Hanu, teeth and eyes gleaming in a dead black face, shouted an order.

The natives jumped left and right as the *moke* rushed straight at Bill with upraised club. The ironwood rang as Bill parried the first blow. Hanu shouted, held his club straight before him, on the defensive.

Out of the corner of his eye Bill could see Fekei working to get behind him. Knowing he was outgeneraled, he struck with all his strength at the soot-black face. Expertly Hanu squirmed aside. Bill leaped backward, barely

sidestepping Fekei's rush, then turned and ran.

Now they would follow; now surely he could separate them and fight them one by one. Despite the *moke's* equal strength and greater skill in the use of the *u'u*, Bill felt himself a match. He hoped that Henri had made good use of the diversion he had created. He could not have fought the five together for ten more seconds.

The natives did pursue—for as long as it took Hanu to gather his breath.

"Stop!" he shouted. "To me! Let the live pig go!"

Fekei, who was close to Bill's heels, stopped instantly. The brush crackled as he rejoined his companions.

With an oath Bill pulled up short. Though outgeneraled again, he saw the third possibility. If the prisoners had freed themselves, such slow and disciplined pursuit would never overtake them. Though he had failed to scatter the natives, their fear of him made their number of little use.

"Ahoy! Frieda, Henri! Poulain!" he bellowed. "Sing out! I'll reach you first!"

"*Bien!* They have gone!" Henri answered, but to Bill's horror, the reply came from the clearing. The young Frenchman had sacrificed himself—was still a prisoner.

Worse followed. Much too close at hand, Frieda screamed one cry of consternation and terror that rang shrilly, that seemed to hang in the air, that brought the sweat to Bill's forehead. This was no response to his shout—and from Poulain not a sound.

Careless of what noise he made, Bill forced his way toward the girl. The denseness of the tropical foliage mocked him. The vines that laced the tree trunks together tripped him, tightened across his chest like ropes. He

halted at last, snatched a mouthful of fine cut, worked it into a quid, and spat. Haste had best be made slowly. There was no pursuit.

"Frieda!" he called again in his deep voice. "For God's sake, sing out, girl!"

A low cry answered. In a moment he had approached near enough to be guided by muffled, half hysterical sobs. He found Frieda alone, crouched like a hare in the thick brush, her face buried in her arms, her shoulders shaking.

"STEADY, now!" Bill rumbled. "You're all right now, kid. Where's Poulain?"

She lifted her head. Blood was flowing from her mouth.

"Gone!" she said. "He knocked me down and ran—that way."

She pointed toward the plantations.

"Gone!" Bill ejaculated.

"Why not? I am the daughter of Van Tromp," said the girl dully. "He hates me, too. He hates his son because Henri loved me. When you dropped the knife Henri cut my bonds first, and then his father's. Poulain seized me. I begged him to carry Henri in his arms, but he would not. He dragged me here, knocked me down, and ran. He knows Hanu will kill us all."

"Yeah?" grunted Bill, who had recovered himself.

The girl smiled at his cheerful aggressiveness. Hopelessness and too much knowledge made the twist of her lips awful to see.

"He is right," she said. "The old man and the girl have gone to kindle the fires on the High Place. Soon Hanu will start the drums beating to summon all the natives to the feast. The drums can talk. Few natives dare to fight the white men face to face, but many are brave enough to club an unarmed man

from behind. You have been over the trail. Can you run that gantlet in the dark?"

"Me? Yeah, or hide till morning."

"Or be hunted down like a pig in the morning," said the girl. "Where is my father?"

"He—uh—he fell over a cliff!"

"I heard him shout. You killed him. We all knew you killed him when it was you that returned, and not he. I do not blame you. He was mad. Poulain and Henri guessed my father was insane. I—knew it. I know—all my father knew, and that is why I tell you we will all die. Even Poulain, even you."

"Shut up! I can get you home!" said Bill.

He was curt, for he saw the grim choice that he must make. To take her home meant to abandon Henri to a horrible fate.

"You are a stranger. You were blind this morning. You could not guess what Henri and I knew," Frieda went on. "Living in the same house, I overheard a word here and a word there. I saw things my father could not keep me from seeing. *M'sieu'*, I watched my father sell his soul to the devil!"

"Meaning Hanu?"

"If there had not been Hanu, there would have been another *moke*! No—first my father closed his eyes to what his workmen did, and soon more workmen came to his plantation. Then he helped. He let Hanu preach of the old gods and the old ways, and shielded him when men disappeared. I knew, but I could not send my own father to the guillotine. Poulain knew, though he had no proof, as I had, and the governor would not listen to him. Poulain wanted to kill my father and take his place; then *he* would let Hanu

preach, and shield him. His plantation would stretch back to the hills."

"Why didn't he shoot your father? I don't mean in the open, but by accident—out hunting?"

"Because Henri swore that if my father were shot he would tell the governor why. His father was not guilty yet, like mine. He could threaten. Poulain did not dare. He had to wait—"

"Till a copper-headed, tattooed fool named Bellow Bill came in and did his dirty work for him, huh?" rumbled the pearler. "Meanwhile Henri figured I might bump off Hanu for him, and clear up the mess? Kid—" Bill paused. Twilight was merging into night. In the gloom of the jungle he could no longer distinguish the girl's features. From the heights a drum began to beat, a dull long throbbing with an irregular cadence. "Are you sure the trails are blocked?"

"You hear," the girl muttered. "Faint strokes, and heavy ones. We hear a mutter like the surf, but to the natives it speaks like a telegraph."

"Men have tried to stop me before. I'm still here," Bill rumbled. "Hanu and his gang had me licked in the brush to-day. On the High Place there'd be firelight, and open ground to make it easy for one of them to get behind me. Women first, that's the rule. I could get you home, and fix Poulain. Why, hell, on the trail I'd meet the cowards!"

The girl was silent. For Bill the temptation to take her silence for consent was strong. Death he did not fear particularly. What shook him was the knowledge that his death would mean the girl's. All the afternoon he had schemed to separate his enemies, and failed. He must face one against five, and with all his self-confidence he was

far too level-headed to count on victory. Women came first. No one would blame Bill—excepting himself.

"And another coward on that trail would be me," he boomed. "I'm sorry, kid, but I can't leave a buddy helpless. You'll have to take the chance—I'm going to give Hanu a busted head or a bigger dinner."

"I am glad! I love Henri, and am glad you will try, even though you must fail!" she called after him with a courage that was heartening.

CHAPTER VI.

DARKNESS.

HE decided to settle the issue quickly. Guided first by the sound of the drum and later by the glimmer of fire, he climbed to the rim of the High Place to strike before his adversaries numbered more than the five able-bodied men.

Before him was a level plateau set with grim black rocks chipped and polished into gigantic chairs. Trees shrouded the place, making the darkness impenetrable. The flickering red light of a bonfire beat upward from a deep pit, over which a huge banyan tree with gnarled and distorted limbs writhed like a thing in torment. This was the High Place, sacred to devilish rites, fit to be the abode of demons.

The rumble of the drum beat at Bellow Bill's ears. At first he could distinguish no human figures. Then the fire blazed up, and against the darkness his enemies were silhouetted. They were clustered amid the twisted roots of the banyan tree. The old man pounded the drum, the men knelt at some task he could not distinguish. Hanu sat in the wizard's seat.

Bill failed to locate Henri. For a

moment he was in despair—which changed swiftly to horror. He had looked on the ground, whereas the Frenchman hung from the tree by a rope looped under his shoulders, dangling above the deep pit and the fire. He still lived, for his head was erect.

One slash of a knife and his body would fall into the pit, to be crushed on the stones beside the fire. The rope must lead down among the banyan's roots which dropped from the limbs to the ground, like props. Among them, therefore, Bill decided to make his stand, lest during the combat the cord be severed. He gripped his club and sprinted across the *paepae*. He was among the natives while they reached for weapons.

"Hi!" he roared. The swing of his *u'u* split a Marquesan skull. "Hi!" Back among the banyan roots he leaped as the natives scattered. He found the cord by which Henri hung, and tensed to meet the onslaught of Hanu. As his men scattered, the *moke* leaped from his chair. He was stripped for the rites he had to perform, his *pareu* twisted into a roll of cloth around his loins. He carried only a club.

Bill leaped from the shelter of the banyan roots and swung a two-handed blow at the black face, a blow that would have knocked Hanu's war club aside and crushed the skull had it landed. The *moke* stepped back, like a boxer who side-steps a roundhouse swing. Bill swung half around with the force of his own blow. The *moke* chopped at his neck.

By a leap sidewise Bill escaped, but Hanu had maneuvered him away from the tree. The swish of the *moke's* club by his cheek taught Bill that in this duel footwork was everything. Unless he were incessantly active his guard could be beaten down. Hanu was as

strong as he, as able to snap the shaft of the war club with a fair blow. Bill jabbed the point of his club at the soot-black face and sprang clear into the open. From the side Fekei struck at him. He saw the dull gleam of a revolver in the native's *pareu*, dodged, parried a blow from a third. Hanu ran up, club upraised with both hands.

Back and back Bill was driven, dodging, hitting when he could, but never striking these foemen more agile than he. He was pushed into the brightest of the firelight. Behind was the edge of the pit. In a rapid flurry of blows the four natives forced him to give ground until further retreat was impossible; yet at least the precipitous drop at his heels now prevented them from attacking him on either side. Fekei dropped his club and dragged out his revolver, screaming to the others to let him shoot; but Hanu pressed the fight, his body shielding Bill.

No fencing, no dodging now. Face to face, both with war clubs raised, they feinted. The issue hung on a single blow.

The *moke* saw an opening and struck. As his club poised, Bill smashed home his own blow, beating Hanu as a boxer beats his opponent to the punch. The clubs met with a resounding crash of splintered wood. Hanu's weapon snapped at the handle, but before Bill could strike again the *moke* lunged forward, crowding under the swing of Bill's club. His shoulders drove against the pearler's hip to hurl him into the pit.

For an instant they were locked, straining. Bill did not yield. He dropped his club, struck once with his fist at the back of Hanu's neck. Staggering, the *moke* grabbed behind with both hands at Bill's throat.

Fekai, dancing behind the wrestlers with the revolver, unable to shoot because the two bodies were as one, yelled with horror—for Bill caught the *moke's* right wrist with both hands, whirled on the verge of the pit, bringing his back to Hanu's breast, and the brown arm rigid over his shoulder.

Hanu's feet shot from the ground. He was catapulted over Bill's shoulder, arms and legs flying. In mid-air he uttered one scream and fell—straight into the heart of the fire. Behind Bill sparks shot up. There was no second cry. The fall stunned Hanu; the flames ended him.

The suddenness of the throw was too much for Fekai. Before the native realized he had a target, Bill grappled him, wrenched the revolver away and sent him sprawling. The two other natives rushed with their clubs. Bill fired twice. Both went down. One lay still. The other uttered a whimpering cry and pressed both hands upon a chest wound that poured blood.

FEKEI lifted his head and blinked at the revolver pointing at his forehead. Tense muscles relaxed. Slowly, very slowly, he rolled upon his stomach and dragged himself inch by inch toward the white man's feet.

"It is finished. I am brave no more," he groaned. "O master, I am *paopao*—sick of life. May I eat the fruit of the *eva*, O master? Our sun is set. Soon only the white man and the sea will be left. The white man does not care, and the sea—the sea does not remember."

The reddish-purple fruit of the *eva* is deadly poison. Marquesan warriors wounded or utterly ashamed use it to escape from pain or contempt. Bill, flushed with victory, knew from the request how utterly he had destroyed

the work of Hanu and Van Tromp. He shook his head.

"You must ask your new chief," he rumbled. "No, not him of the black face who burns in the fire. Your chief is there!" Bill pointed to Henri, swinging gently in the boughs of the banyan tree.

"Roll the drum into the fire, and wait to tell your brothers that it summoned that fires in the High Place are taboo, that long pig is taboo, now and forever."

As the drum fell on the flames Bill himself lowered Henri to the ground. The Frenchman was barely conscious. Reaction from the certainty of horrible death had left him limp.

"*Magnifique* — magnificent!" he murmured. "But Frieda? My father?"

"Frieda's right as rain," Bill rumbled with significant emphasis, and carried Henri to the wizard's chair.

The Frenchman shrank at the touch of the stone.

"No!" he muttered. "I dangled and watched Hanu sit here. I cannot stand it—lay me somewhere else!"

"Hell, you got nerve enough to stay here," Bill insisted. "Chuck a front to-night, and you'll damn near own these islands. There's natives coming."

For though the drum had beaten but a short time, voices were audible and torches of candle-nuts glimmered at the edge of the High Place. Henri slumped in the black stone seat, and Bill squatted at his feet, revolver in hand.

In the darkness beneath the trees only Fekai, who stood brooding at the rim of the pit in the glow of firelight, was visible to the newcomers. They advanced confidently—a party of four natives, supporting a fifth man whose

feet dragged—a short, corpulent little man, whose clothes had been torn from a body that glimmered white when the firelight struck it. The message of the drums had closed the trails to Poulain. No bullock was ever dragged more abjectly to slaughter.

"Bring him here," Bill growled—in Marquesan, and in his deepest voice. The natives obeyed, unsuspecting. Poulain groaned, for Bill's counterfeit of Hanu's voice had been lifelike. Not until the party was within twenty feet did they recognize Henri's head against the glow of the fire and observe that Bill wore clothes.

With a howl of consternation and with one accord, they dropped their burden and fled.

"STOP!" Bill roared, still in Marquesan. He might as well have spoken to the wind. Screaming with terror, the four natives sprinted down the trail.

"They'll carry the news," the pearler rumbled. "The trails will be open now. Well, Henri—speak up!"

"What can I say? After all, it is my father," Henri muttered.

"Why, I can think of plenty," Bill murmured. He raised his voice. "Poulain, what do you think of natives that eat long pig?"

Still flat on the ground, the planter shuddered and groaned. "*M'sieu'*, I am overwhelm'," he gasped. "Zis is no time to mock."

"You double crossing worm, what have you got to say?" Bill boomed. "Hanu was a man, according to his lights, and Van Tromp was crazy, but you! If it wasn't for your son I'd march you to the governor! As it is, day after to-morrow you're going to sail away with me in my schooner, and

you're never going to come back again. Savvy?"

Poulain groveled in the dirt.

"To-morrow," Bill went on, "Henri's going to marry Frieda. You've got to be at the wedding, and deed your plantation to your son as a wedding gift. That will take care of them, and you too, in case Van Tromp's goes to weeds. Which I doubt. I think," Bill chuckled to Henri, "that Fekei will persuade the natives return to work for you."

"That does not matter," Henri whispered. "But for saving Frieda and me—how can I thank you? How repay—"

Bill stuffed a handful of fine cut into his mouth.

"I got my pay when Hanu's feet left the ground and Fekei forgot to shoot," he grinned. "Still, after the wedding you can mix me a quart of those coconut juice, gin, and wine cocktails of yours. Let me see how you mix them. That's what I came ashore for."

"Gladly, *m'sieu'*," Henri answered with wide eyes. "Though—for me—if I had come ashore for that, I would see Hanu's face, tattooed black as soot, when I lifted that cocktail. The liquor would choke me!"

"It 'll only make it taste better for me, being a roughneck like I am," Bill boomed. "Only, next time some one starts crying because the poor Marquesans are dying, I'm going to say, 'It's a damn good thing they are, for they were hellions to live among before white men broke them.'"

Bill lifted his voice.

"Frieda!" he bellowed until the black rocks of the High Place rang. "Frieda! Henri wants to see you! Sing out, girl!"

THE END.



Boyeau was staring aghast at his own fingers

Voodoo'd

Death stalks the gloomy halls of an old New Orleans mansion as Basil Boyean, French Creole aristocrat, struggles against the clutching horror of mystery and black magic

By KENNETH PERKINS

Author of "The Gun Crusade," "The Mark of the Moccasin," etc.

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

BERTRAM JUVENAL was strangled and poisoned mysteriously in New Orleans while visiting his brother, Amos, at the historic old Juvenal manse. Anatole Bouche, a servant convicted of the crime, was shot dead in attempting to escape.

A young Creole aristocrat, Basil Boyean, that afternoon underwent a gland operation for "three-day chills."

He was uneasy over the possibility that he had acquired characteristics of the dead man from whom the gland extract had been taken, and the possibility that it might have been Bouche.

Obsessed with the Juvenal case, Basil visited the manse, which had been converted into a boarding house, and, in a daze, spent the night there. The only other guest was Bertram's son,

This story began in the Argosy for May 10.

Lucien. The household consisted of Amos Juvenal, the proprietor; his adopted daughter, Ninon, and three Negro servants: *Œdipe*, the butler; Zozo, the maid, and Gumbo Lou, cook.

During the night Lucien was murdered in the same way his father had been. Detective Donnelly was assigned to investigate. He learned from the proprietor that a secret panel provided a passageway between Boyean's room and Lucien's. Basil's mind was so confused that he was not sure he himself might not have committed the crime.

"Somebody has put a voodoo curse on this house!" Zozo cried.

CHAPTER VI.

THE INTERRUPTED TELEGRAM.

BASIL BOYEAN could recall the events of that morning only as a man recalls the disjointed events of a fevered dream. He found himself in the drawing-room of the Juvenal manse, where he had been requested to "make himself at home" while the police went through their preliminary and tedious routine.

A hazy yellowish light filtered in through the reed screens from the patio, revealing the objects of the room indistinctly, as if they were enveloped in a fog.

Basil's eyes roved aimlessly about the splotched walls, passing from the portrait of one race horse to another. They brought back a hideous memory: Yesterday for the first time in his life he had felt a desire to go out to the race track and plunge!

He looked away. But there were more race horses on the opposite wall. He was surrounded by them—long, slender creatures all out of proportion.

His eyes dropped. He gazed for a long time at the swamp-grass rugs, but then his mind began to whirl. There was nothing in the rugs to hold his attention.

He looked up again—cautiously avoiding the horses—until he saw an Empire table cluttered with dusty musical instruments. They were the queer barbaric relics of the days when the Juvenal family was in its zenith: the jawbone of a mule and the brass key with which its teeth were scraped, a half gourd attached to a stick with one or two banjo strings still in place, reeds of brake-cane strung together like Pan's pipes.

These antiquated instruments symbolized the dead past of the Juvenal manse. The room was like a tomb and Basil was a prisoner in it. He would have to wait there among those giant horses, those dusty gourds, those tattered palm leaf fans until the police liberated him.

He could see the police officers and plain-clothes men through the arched doors that led to the dank patio. They were passing in and out among the palms and banana trees, mounting the adobe steps up to the iron gallery, or going in and out of the dingy doors of the rooms in the back of the patio, which in the old days had been the slave quarters.

Police sergeants, captains, reporters, were everywhere, swarming over the place like rats. Apparently the second murder in the Juvenal manse was an event of first magnitude in the crime annals of New Orleans.

Outside, the street was alive with a typical New Orleans river crowd—dockers, deck hands from the river boats, "mud clerks," quadroons, black-bearded fishermen and Cajans. For the most part they loitered about in

grim silence, drinking in the horror. Indeed, the only voices raised above a whisper were the calls of the colored merchants who always followed the mob: "*Crème à la vanille!*"—" *Pralines, pistache!*"—" *Crème à la vanille!*"

But Basil neither listened to the cries in the street, nor to the matter-of-fact confab of the police in the patio. He was absorbed with something else—something far more consequential, dramatic, horrible: He was obsessed with himself!

THE young Creole sat there breathing heavily, attempting to cool himself with a nervous and rapid movement of a fan. There were fans everywhere in the house—Chinese fans, silk fans with paintings of court ladies, turtle-shell fans from Havana, and the inevitable electric contraption with its dry-cell batteries.

Boyeau's mind was whirling about like that electric fan—endlessly, maddeningly, stirring up queer, stagnant ideas, as that fan stirred up the drowsy, fetid atmosphere of the old parlor. And one idea kept whirling back to him over and over again: "*How did I know about that secret panel?*"

He tried to focus his distracted brain upon that one question. What supernatural power had revealed that secret to him? Some men are given revelations, so he had heard. He took little stock in the belief. But some men have the gift of insight. Some know all things. Some can leave their corporeal bodies and go out and perform deeds. Some...

"It's sheer lunacy!" he cried, getting up and pacing the room. "I may be going mad. *That* could be understood. But I could not know about that panel.

No power on earth could perform such a miracle. Perhaps I just got up in my sleep and tried to walk through that wall. Perhaps by an uncanny twist of circumstances, or my own dogged, abnormal persistence, I found a way through the partition. Perhaps it was not I, but some one else. They say a man may be possessed of a disembodied spirit not his own. The Jews tell of a *dybbuk*. No, it's too horrible. I'd rather be insane!"

He stopped pacing and threw himself into one of the chairs. The cane creaked dolefully with the sudden weight. He sat there for a moment, his hands clutching his head. When he looked up, he found himself facing the chief of police.

The chief was a massive man with a square florid face, a close-clipped, iron-gray mustache and a pock-marked nose.

"Good morning, Mr. Boyean. They tell me you've been waiting in here. Sorry I couldn't get to see you sooner."

Boyeau greeted him tonelessly and took the proffered hand. He noticed that two policemen stood well outside of the doors, on the flagstone pavement of the patio. He was alone with the chief.

"I suppose, Mr. Boyean, you'll be wanting to go about your own business to-day. And perhaps I can see my way clear to let you go. But this case now, it's the funniest thing that's happened in my department ever since I was a patrolman. Can't seem to get started on anything."

"It must be an extraordinary case to call for your personal supervision, sir," Boyean remarked.

"I'm not going to remain here in charge. It'll all go through the regular routine. But when I heard another

murder had been committed here—and three days after that fellow was shot—the fellow we thought beyond any doubt was guilty—well, you can see, Mr. Boyean, the city's going to be up in arms. I'll be blamed. The district attorney's office will be blamed. Everybody will say we got the wrong man!"

"You think the same person committed both of these crimes?" Boyean asked.

"There's no doubt about it. First old Bertram Juvenal stops in this house and gets clawed to death. Less than a month later Bertram's son comes here and meets the same fate. And I mean exactly that. The medical examiner has been here. Says there was the same kind of poison on those finger marks. We've sent the body to the morgue and there'll be an autopsy report for whoever wants it. But we know how it all happened. All we've got to do now is to find out who did it."

"HOW far has your investigation led you?" Boyean asked quietly.

"It's led us a lot of places. One of the homicide squad boys ended up in that alley of Negro shacks on the levee, where they'd told him some one had stolen a pig. The pig was found with his throat cut lying beside a shell path. That's the kind of leads we've got."

The cumbersome dignitary fanned himself with his cap and muttered an oath.

"Another lead was just as crazy. This sweet-smelling duffer they call Uncle Amos told us about a secret door right next to the murdered man's bed—"

"Yes. I was there at the time," Boyean said.

"And that ended up in *your* room, Mr. Boyean!" the chief snorted in disgust. "Which means he couldn't have gone through that way. Another blind lead."

Boyeau's slender, dark fingers were intertwined. He looked up at the chief's florid, wrinkled face for a moment, then inquired: "Isn't there a chance that the slayer could have prowled through my room without awakening me?"

"Yes, we discussed that," the chief said. "But Donnelly said your door was locked when he called you this morning. Also you had locked your windows."

"Yes, I locked my windows. But as for the door—well, I put the key in my pocket last night. A key could have been thrust in from the other side."

The chief's face lit up. A myriad of wrinkles danced about the sharp blue eyes. "Sure! That's it!" he exclaimed. "I'm glad you've brought that point out, Mr. Boyean. It kind of nettled Donnelly."

"I dare say Donnelly and perhaps others may question the coincidence of my being in that room."

"Good Lord, no! Don't get that idea into your head, Mr. Boyean. Why, if the public heard that you were one of the suspects, they'd go crazy. We all know you, Mr. Boyean. Donnelly explained how you happened to stop here—and that you gave an assumed name."

"Naturally, a Boyean would give an assumed name stopping at a joint like this. Then you had other good reasons, I understand. Writing an article, and didn't want Uncle Amos to know you'd come here to get material about the murder of his brother. You did right. That's explained. You're out

of it." The chief put his cap on again and got up.

"But you can easily see, sir," he went on, "we got to go about this thing according to the most rigid rules. You'd be of tremendous help, since you spent the night in the next room. Of course, I would like very much to keep every one in the house as a material witness, but—"

He hesitated, studying Boyean with a diplomatic lift of his eyebrows.

Boyeau understood what was in the chief's mind. He, the chief, could hardly see his way clear to let Boyean go. But the thought of detaining the young aristocrat against his wish was obviously embarrassing.

Boyeau spoke first. He knew that if he should attempt to leave the city he would put himself in a very unfavorable light; furthermore, such an attempt would be unsuccessful. The police were not going to let him go so easily, despite his social prominence. It would be better to take the bull by the horns, so to speak, and offer to stay in the very house itself, in order to facilitate investigation of the crime.

"Why not detain me here as a material witness?" he asked frankly. "I cannot stay in the house otherwise, for the family would object strenuously. But if you ordered it, they must consent. Besides, I am more than ever intrigued by this case. I came here expressly to collect material for a *Mercure* article on abnormal criminal tendencies, and I rather believe I shall find a gold mine here."

THE chief was overjoyed at this convenient solution to his problem. "Consider yourself detained in this house then," he laughed. "Of course, I hope you won't become impatient, sir. The investigation prom-

ises many entanglements. The first steps will be slow—following the lines of the regular police routine. I've got my Bertillon man going over the murder room, and your room and the hall for finger-prints. The proprietor and his daughter and the three servants are getting a good third degree. Something's going to happen before to-night. Meanwhile, if I can do anything, don't hesitate for a moment to call on me."

The chief paused as his massive form blotted out the dim light of the arched door. "And if you want to send for any of your personal effects, one of the boys will take a car and get 'em. You're to have everything you want. Meals from the outside—anything."

"You're very kind, sir. But I will telephone to my valet to come down in my own car."

The chief was about to enter the patio when he suddenly stepped aside. It was a polite movement, attended with a slight bow of his head. He had met Juvenal's daughter, and had been almost on the point of running over her.

"I wish to enter, *m'sieu'*," she said.

"Certainly, miss. Certainly!"

Something in the expression of her face must have intrigued him, for he paused before going out, and turned to watch her as she strode resolutely into the parlor.

She went straight toward the chair before which Boyean was standing. Then with her shapely head tilted upward, and the full barrage of her luminous black eyes focused upon him, she cried out:

"Why are you still in this house, you *meurtrier*! You murderer, you came last night and called yourself what you are not! You killed my cousin

—just as you killed my uncle! Are you here to kill us all?"

Her eyes had the green glow of a cat's in the dark; her chest heaved, her voice rose to a scream. "What kind of fiend are you to haunt this house? What have we done to you? Who are you? How did you know how to get into that room—when even I, who have lived here all my life, knew nothing of it? What plot is it? Who told you the secrets of our house? Who sent you here to annihilate us all? *Meurtrier! Assassin!*"

Boyeau had sunk back into his chair, as if the fury of her attack had pressed him down. The chief stood at the door, a silent massive shadow against the light, too flabbergasted to speak. Evidently he considered this scene something outside of his jurisdiction—something between these two scions of French Creole blood—whose passions and hatreds he dared not try to comprehend.

It was Boyeau who spoke first, while the girl stood before him, regaining her spent breath.

"I regret, *mademoiselle*, that you have jumped to such a bizarre conclusion. As you say, I know nothing of your house, or of your family—except the name which in Governor Claiborne's time was an honorable one."

She clenched her slender olive-colored fists, and having lost the last vestige of her Creole gentleness, she seemed ready to spit upon him. But Basil struggled up to his feet and faced her. Then, as she was recoiling, he said calmly:

"The chief inspector and others of the *Sûreté, ma'm'selle*, are of the opinion that the assassin came through my room while I was asleep."

"It's a lie!" the girl cried, whirling

about and facing the big inspector. "If it were not a lie—then how could a man go through that room without this *meurtrier* hearing him? This man was awake all night. I heard him talking. Or if he was merely talking in his sleep as he says—then it was a restive sleep from which he would have been awakened by the song of a mosquito outside the netting!"

BY this time the chief had regained part of his composure. He came back from the door, which was now darkened by several more figures—an officer, a reporter, Uncle Amos himself.

"You better let us attend to this, Miss Juvenal," the chief said in a kindly voice. "We'll leave no stone unturned. All I can say is that this young gentleman is known to us all as a man of highest character and standing. Wait now!" He raised his hand to warn her against another outburst. "Wait, please! We're detaining him, if that'll satisfy you. Meanwhile, please leave the investigation to us."

"Very well! But I will say one thing else," the girl shot back. "You men of the *Sûreté* are no good. You have already shot down an innocent man. You better get the right one this time. And *voilà*, there he is!" Her finger, pointing at Boyeau, trembled so that the jeweled rings scintillated.

"Perhaps you will let him go because he is rich!" she added fiercely. "Perhaps! But he will not go far. Jacques will get him. He still lives to avenge his brother's death—and his father's!"

With that she backed away, her eyes still blazing with insensate fury. A lane opened in the crowd outside, as she reached the door and then turned abruptly and fled into the garden.

Before either the chief or Boyean had had time to gasp their astonishment at this scene, the squat form of Detective Donnelly appeared at the threshold.

"Before you go, chief," he said, "I want to report we got another lead. A good one. Take a squint at this." He handed a piece of notebook paper to the big official. "Looks to me like young Lucien was writin' a telegram to his brother just before he got croaked last night."

The chief read it half aloud:

JACQUES JUVENAL, care of Towhead
Hunting Lodge, New Iberia.

Come back. Want to get away from here. Something wrong with this damned house. They think I'm going to sleep here to-night, but—

And then it trailed off into an illegible scrawl.

"Seems like he locked himself in the room, then got the willies," Donnelly was explaining. "Wanted to get out an' spend the night somewheres else, but stopped long enough to write this telegram to his brother. Didn't finish it though, as you can see."

"Where did you find this?" the chief asked, still perusing the paper.

"In this gentleman's room, sir." The tortoise-shell thumb indicated Boyean.

The bushy gray brows of the chief went up in surprise. "Whereabouts in his room?" he asked.

"Tucked under the mattress at the foot of the bed. Looks like the murderer must 'a' picked it off the table where young Juvenal was writin' it, an' then after dumpin' the victim he took it with him."

The chief was still thinking, rubbing his forehead, which was like rusty, corrugated iron.

"And likewise," Donnelly contin-

ued, "it seems like he didn't want Jacques Juvenal to get this message from his dead brother. He was powerful afraid of Jacques, seems like."

"Wire Jacques Juvenal to come here," was all the chief had to say.

CHAPTER VII.

"FINGER-PRINTS DON'T LIE!"

TWO telegrams were sent to Jacques Juvenal. One was the unfinished missive from his brother. Another, sent at the same time, gave the news of his brother's death. Both messages were sent to the Towhead Hunting Lodge, some thirty miles south of New Iberia in the sea marshes.

The bereaved brother hastened to New Orleans in his high-powered car, arriving at the Juvenal home at 10 P.M. that night.

But before his arrival many events had transpired in the ill-fated manse.

An atmosphere of comparative calm settled upon the house. The chief of police had departed, leaving four patrolmen, the Bertillon man, and a detective or two, with Donnelly in charge. A visit of several operatives from the district attorney's office had brought forth nothing new. The corpse had been taken to the morgue and the most of the reporters had returned to their respective offices with material for several extras.

Basil Boyean, availing himself of the courtesy extended to him by the chief inspector, sent for his valet, Amontillado, who arrived with the necessities which a gentleman of Boyean's class required when stopping out for the night.

As soon as the valet—a half-breed Gascon and Filipino—arrived, Boyean

dispatched him with a note to Dr. Polti of the St. Louis Hospital:

MY DEAR DR. POLTI:

I have been troubled by a grave obsession from which you alone can save me. It is very urgent that I learn just where you obtained the gland extract for the operation you performed upon me. Let the bearer bring your answer by word of mouth. I assure you, doctor, your answer is of vital importance. My very sanity depends upon it. Indeed, my life depends upon it.

Yours in great perturbation,
BASIL BOYEAN.

The young aristocrat instructed his servant to secrete the note carefully and explain to the patrolman who would stop him at the door, that he had been sent to the restaurant, La Louisiane, for a lunch. To substantiate this story, he was to bring the lunch back with him when he returned to the Juvenal manse.

Shortly after the departure of the valet, Detective Donnelly strolled into the gloomy parlor, ostensibly for a friendly chat. Boyean realized that the detective wanted to put him off his guard, on the chance that he might let drop some illuminating statement. Donnelly's friendliness, unlike that of the police chief whom Boyean knew personally, was forced and purposely ingratiating. It was the smiling humility of a toady eager to catch his social superior in a *faux pas*.

"We been checkin' up about every one in the house, Mr. Boyean," Donnelly began. "There was only you an' old Uncle Amos an' his daughter. Then there was the two servants."

"I thought there were three servants?"

"Sure, but I ain't countin' the butler. He's out of it."

"Out of it?"

"Yeah, wasn't home all night. Went to a club over to Congo Square. I sent Detective Tyndal there to check up. Tyndal worked with a couple o' colored operatives on the force, an' the butler's alibi is straight. That guy was seen by a dozen reputable Negroes over there, one of 'em a Baptist minister. Then we checked up on what the club did an' found they was havin' some sort of a *bamboula* party up till almost daylight. The butler left the house at eight last night an' come back at five this mornin'. Two different cops seen him on his way back here—one on Canal Street, another on Bourbon."

"THERE'S no reasonable doubt about his innocence," Boyean agreed.

"That's what I say," the detective went on. "The maid an' the cook here was both woke up when he came home. The maid gets her coffee ready for the master of the joint. An' half an hour later finds the dead body. Well, the body was dead since ten last night, same as we figured. Medical examiner made it pretty sure about ten. So there you have it. Two suspects crossed off the list."

"Who is left?" Boyean asked.

"The maid an' the cook, an' I ain't puttin' much past either of 'em. Though our third degree didn't reveal much. The maid is of Jalloff blood, which accounts for her good looks. The butler calls her a '*Mericaïne coquine*—whatever that means."

"It's the term these New Orleans French Negroes apply to American Negroes," Boyean explained.

"All right. An' the cook calls her a *garce*, hates her because the little quad-room gets all of her mistress's clothes, bein' they don't fit the cook. Besides this, I didn't learn nothin' excep' that

she won't work, worships an' apes her mistress, an' lives on pecan pralines an' orange-flower syrup. A fine bunch of hooey for our records."

"That leaves only the cook as a possible suspect," Basil commented.

"The cook an' two others—Uncle Amos an' his daughter," Donnelly corrected.

"But they don't count," Boyean said.

"Eh? What'd you say? Don't count?" Donnelly blew a thick cloud of smoke that hung like a blanket in the murky air. "Reckon you don't know much about this branch of the Juvenal family."

"Good Heavens, *m'sieu'*, you don't mean to stand there and say—"

"I ain't sayin' nothin'—much."

Donnelly's half-inch cigar stub was tucked securely between his gold teeth. "But," he added, "there's a whale of a difference between this branch here—I mean the proprietor an' his girl—an' the other branch—Bertram Juvenal an' his two sons."

"The nephew who was killed last night did not look exactly like the scion of Creole aristocracy to me," Boyean remarked, and he regretted the observation as soon as he had made it.

"Well, you ought to know," Donnelly said obsequiously, "bein' a Creole yourself."

That was the end of the interview. Whether Donnelly had made any progress, no one can say. He had done most of the talking himself. But then, that was his method. When he gave the reins of conversation to the men he was examining, he had always found they were on guard. When he did the talking and got his listener into a receptive state he was more apt to learn something.

In some respects it was the same

method employed by practitioners of Freudian philosophy who first seek to "break down" the personality of a patient, then build it up again.

NO sooner had Donnelly disappeared within the patio, than Boyean's valet arrived. He brought with him a platter of food. The platter was sufficiently thick to contain a quart of scalding hot water under a false bottom, which served to keep the meal warm.

Amontillado cleared a table of its plaster images, red-plush photograph album, assortment of fans, and then set out the *Louisiane* luncheon.

The crawfish bisque, chicken St. Pierre and grillade remained untouched as Boyean looked up at the flat brown face of his servant.

"What did the doctor say?"

"Jus' wan word, *m'sieu'*."

"And what word was that?"

"*Bouche!*"

Not being familiar with the name of the man convicted of Bertram Juvenal's murder, the valet did not know why his master's face went white. He watched Mr. Boyean a moment, and then set about with professional equanimity to pouring a glass of sparkling wine—a bottle of hock from the Boyean cellar.

Basil's eyes had widened and he was staring as if in a hypnotic trance at the grotesque paintings of the Juvenal race horses.

Now he understood what had happened. He felt a strange kinship with those horses—the kinship that a trainer, born and bred in the stables, feels toward the magnificent animals he serves.

He sat thus for a long time, without hearing Amontillado's gentle voice urging him to drink. Everything was

dark—except for those painted horses standing out in high relief of light and color against their varnished backgrounds.

It was Donnelly's rasping and falsely affable voice that brought him to with a start.

"Funny thing, Mr. Boyean. An' when I say funny I mean absolutely plumb crazy. Don't know what in the name of ten thousand tombstones is happenin' in this joint."

Boyeau looked up and was aware of the squat ugly figure in front of him.

"Our Bertillon man just gave his report, an' we all said he was crazy. But finger-prints don't generally lie."

Boyeau stiffened; a galvanic current went through him as if he expected the final coup to the tragedy. The word "finger-prints" awoke him from his daze like a splash of cold water.

"You have a clew, I suppose?" he inquired in a tight voice. "The finger-prints, you say?"

"Yeah, but they're phony. Whose prints do you figure they are?"

"I couldn't be expected to answer that, Mr. Donnelly," Boyean managed to say.

"I should say you couldn't. An' there ain't no one on this earth that could. Well, I'll tell you: *They're the finger-prints of Bouche!*"

"I don't quite understand—"

"I know damn' well you don't. Neither do I. Nor any one. But they're his prints just the same. Not very clear. Kind of floored the examiner first. But they're clear enough to match up with the prints we already have of Bouche. An' there were three of 'em—one on the neck of the corpse, an' two others on the woodwork where the trapdoor is at."

The detective went on talking, his usual rough confidential tone sharp-

ened by his own astonishment. But Boyean was no longer listening.

With an expression of utter horror in his eyes—an expression which the detective could by no means understand—Boyeau was staring at his own fingers, which he held upward before him, outstretched like an open fan.

CHAPTER VIII.

JACQUES JUVENAL.

JACQUES JUVENAL, elder brother of the murdered Lucien, arrived at the manse at ten o'clock that night.

He came in a high-powered roadster, the rumble seat of which was loaded with his hunting togs, shotguns, and two sacks of speckled woodcocks and rainbow-headed mallards. Cédipe, the butler, went out, bowing and shuffling before the guest with obviously sincere respect and affection. His piebald face was wreathed in smiles, smiles that bared his snuff-clinkered teeth.

"Praise the *bon Dieu* you've come, *petit mouche!*" the old major-domo cried. "*Petit mouche*" was the name by which Jacques Juvenal had been known when, as a boy, he had first visited his uncle's house.

The butler proceeded to unpack the car, but Jacques told him in a kindly voice not to bother. He could have the ducks, but the rest of the kit was to remain. It was quite evident that the young hunter had no intention of spending too long a time under the ancestral roof.

The greeting tendered to him by the rest of the household was just as effusive. Amos Juvenal, his uncle, ran out into the *porte-cochère*, put both arms about the youth, and kissed him

on each cheek. Ninon fairly rushed into his arms.

Gumbo Lou, the huge black cook, waddled out, rubbing her hands on her guinea-blue dress. Zozo, the maid, came out arrayed in a new hair net, lace cap, and a fresh application of brunette powder. She waited coyly in the offing, smiling and nibbling at a praline.

Boyeau, standing in the doorway of the parlor which opened upon the patio, was a witness to this whole scene. Donnelly stood behind him, puffing laconically at a short cigar stub.

The meeting between Jacques and Ninon was not without a touch of drama as well as romance. It was quite apparent as the girl lifted her face to him, so that the full illumination of the *fanal* light hanging in the *porte-cochère* fell upon her, that she looked on this cousin as a hero, a liberator.

Jacques Juvenal, it must be said, was a prepossessing type. Basil was surprised at the first sight of him. He had expected a wizened, jaundiced man like his brother Lucien. Instead, he saw a tall, rugged, bronzed fellow of perhaps twenty-nine years.

There was no smile upon Jacques's face, but a gentle, pleasant light shone in the brown eyes as his uncle and the servants greeted him. And when Ninon lifted her face to his to be kissed, there was a slight quiver of the strong mouth, which in a grave, sad way, might have been a smile. It was the only smile Basil saw on that face for a long time.

Totally oblivious of the detective and Boyeau, Amos Juvenal brought his nephew into the parlor, his arm still about the young man's shoulders.

"It is terrible, *mon cher* Jacques!" the uncle was whimpering. "My heart bleeds for you! Your father—and then your brother! It is an act of an

unjust fate! What has happened, we cannot tell. It is too horrible to repeat. Something has come to this house. We are all under a spell. Who may be next, I ask myself? Are the Juvenals to be wiped out? My little Ninon—"

He broke into tears at this, and his face fell, buried on the powerful shoulder.

Ninon, holding tightly to the other hand of her cousin, burst out then, as if taking up the recital where her father had left it:

"Jacques, *mon chéri*! You must not stay here. We are doomed. The police will do nothing. They have already blundered and sent one man to his death. The murderer is still hovering over us. We are lost! And perhaps you, *mon chéri*, are to be next!"

JACQUES disengaged himself from the tearful attentions of his uncle and took the little girl in his arms.

"I've come here, Ninon, to find him. Take heart. I'll find the man who killed my father—and my brother!"

"But yes, we have all taken heart!" Ninon cried, her eyes streaming with tears.

Indeed, she had told what was quite evidently the truth. There was a clear bright light in her eyes, which Basil, standing in the darkness of a corner of the room, had not seen before.

The three servants were grouped in the doorway, their hands folded and held to their breasts in an attitude of little less than adoration. The whole past history of Cousin Jacques's relation to that household was revealed in that picture.

"What has happened thus far?" he asked finally.

The uncle turned, scowling under the lights of the chandelier toward the

corner of the room where Boyean and Donnelly were waiting.

"Let me present the gentleman from the *Sûreté*, who is in charge of the investigation," said the elder Juvenal.

Donnelly came out into the center of the room, shook hands with Jacques and offered him a cigar.

"I been workin' on the case since six this mornin', Mr. Juvenal," he explained to Jacques. "I mean, I been here most of the time, and this afternoon I had a long confab at headquarters. Then I came back to wait for you. The chief inspector will be down again in the mornin'."

"But what has happened?" Jacques asked again.

"Nothin'," Donnelly said squarely. "Absolutely nothin'. We got a few clues, but they don't seem to get us where I generally get by this time. The Bertillon man's been here, an' says the murder was done same as the other. They took your brother to the morgue, but we ain't got the post-mortem report yet. The examiner was called away sudden to another case, an' bein' we ain't goin' to learn anything by that post-mortem anyway, why, I didn't say I was in a hurry."

"And is this one of your operatives?" Jacques inquired, bowing to Boyean, who still remained cowering in the shadows of the room.

"Pardon, *m'sieu'*!" the uncle exclaimed. "I forgot you were with us. This is my nephew, M. Jacques Juvenal. This is one Monsieur Boyean. Perhaps you know of the family—even though you have not been in New Orleans for many years."

"Yes, I remember the family," Jacques said. He bowed again to Boyean. "I am charmed, *m'sieu'*."

Basil came out a few steps and

bowed. He then looked up, facing the bereaved man. A fit of dizziness, of abject fear, seemed to be creeping over him, but he fought against it. There was something in the soft brown eyes of Jacques Juvenal which gave him courage. He finally managed to say:

"I am deeply grieved for you, *m'sieu'*, in your double loss."

In that moment of tense, fearful drama, Basil was conscious of a gasp from the throat of the girl standing by Jacques's side. It was scarcely audible, and yet it breathed eloquently of untold hate, sorrow, fear.

Luckily, the affable voice of the detective broke the tension of that terrible moment. "Mr. Boyean here slept in the room next to your brother's last night. That's why the inspector asked him to stay here an' help me unravel this business. Mr. Boyean is an educated man an' pretty chummy with all the higher-ups. We're lucky to have him with us. Between him an' me an' you and uncle—I mean Mr. Juvenal here—we'd ought to get to the bottom of this."

"We *will* get to the bottom of it," Jacques agreed.

"MEANWHILE, I'll be gettin' home," continued the exhausted Donnelly. "I've got the place guarded. Two men out in front an' two in the back lot. They'll be relieved at twelve, an' another squad takes their place. Nobody's leavin' or comin' in to-night, so I advise you all to turn in an' get some sleep."

He put on his hat and went to the door. There he turned around, his straw hat shoved back from his low forehead. "I'd also like to advise one thing else, Mr. Jacques, it might be just as well for you to stop at a hotel to-night."

"Yes, yes!" Ninon burst out. "You mustn't stay here, Jacques, *mon chéri*. You cannot stay here!"

"Why not?" the uncle asked in surprise. "Has he not stayed here many a time when he was a boy? *Ma foi!* Of course you shall stay, Jacques. Your old room."

"Yes, I'll stay in my old room," Jacques said quietly.

He then repaired to the dining room, accompanied by his uncle and Ninon. The three servants trooped after him like a rabble of children following a hero.

Donnelly and Boyean were left alone—and forgotten.

"It don't look so good," was Donnelly's observation. "Just what's goin' to happen to that young feller I don't know. But I got a fairly good idea."

"You don't mean—"

"I mean I'm gettin' out of here. This place gives me the willies. They've moved you to another room, Mr. Boyean. Your things have been taken over there by your valet. By the way, them colored folks are goin' to be about as friendly with your valet as a swamp full o' crocodiles. I advise you to let him sleep in the anteroom next to you."

"I'll ask M. Juvenal to have a cot put in there for him," Boyean consented readily.

"I've already arranged it," was the detective's laconic reply.

"Your foresight is most commendable, Mr. Donnelly."

"An' I'll see you in the mornin'. Chief will be here about nine."

"What's the chief coming for?" Boyean asked.

"To make the arrest."

"To make the arrest! What do you mean by that, *m'sieu'?*"

"We got a pretty good line on the

whole business, an' unless I miss my guess, we'll have our bird in the coop before noon."

"Just who is it you suspect, *m'sieu'?*"

"You'll learn that in the mornin'," Donnelly said, lighting the last remaining nibble of his cigar. "Meanwhile, you better have your valet fix up a little gumbo an' a nip of somethin'. You're kind o' green about the gills."

Boyeau heard him giving orders to the two patrolmen outside of the *portecochère* as he left. After the sound of his police department Ford had died away, an ominous silence descended upon the house.

Then, about an hour later, Basil went into the patio, where his valet was waiting for him.

As he was being ushered to his room, the young aristocrat caught sight of several people on the opposite corner of the patio. The butler was carrying a wrought-iron scone with a single candle. The flame burned without wagging, sending out a yellow aura in the dank air.

Jacques Juvenal was following him. His uncle and cousin and the two women servants remained on the flagstones as he went up the outer stairs to the gallery above.

As Jacques was ushered into his room, Basil evoked the picture of a bird swimming toward the lair of a water moccasin.

CHAPTER IX.

A MIDNIGHT ATTACK.

DESPITE the gumbo prepared for him by his servant, and the glass of Montilla sherry, Basil was unable to rest. The hectic day with its police, its reporters, the crowds in the

street had worked havoc with his nerves. But the silence of the night was worse.

It was not an absolute silence. A frog was chirping in the stagnant fountain in the patio. There was an occasional drone of voices as the two patrolmen in the rear of the house just below Boyean's window spoke to each other. The *chug-chug* of a motor packet rattled across the wide expanse of the Mississippi like a fusillade of musketry. And the jarring note awoke a chorus of locusts.

The locusts were everywhere. They started singing in a moss-hung oak far away somewhere on the levee, then with a deafening shrillness a multitude of them gave answer from the very heart of the Juvenal house. Down there in the patio, the palmettos and rubber trees seemed to give forth a desperate, irascible utterance.

Basil jumped from his chair—he had not yet started to undress—and ran to the window. That old superstition that the call of locusts signalized death might have been congenital with him.

His valet, already asleep on his cot in the anteroom, awoke and appeared at the door. He begged his master to go to bed. It was after twelve. But without turning from the window, Boyean signaled him to go back.

The window overlooked an empty lot on the back of the house. A cotton compress flanked one side. On the other, a desolate stretch of weeds and shell mounds stretched toward the levee street. Straight ahead the railroad tracks skirted a cotton shed that was not less than a mile long. Beyond was the Mississippi, which Basil could see just across the tip of the levee. Below his window he saw a policeman sitting on a barrel and smoking a pipe.

The world out there seemed like something that Basil Boyean had left far behind, discarded, forgotten. He turned to another window—one which faced upon his new world. It opened upon the gallery.

This gallery ran completely around three sides of the patio, beginning at a *perron*, or outdoor staircase, just across the patio from Boyean's room, then running along the three walls till it ended at Boyean's window.

He observed that the Juvenal family had put him at the farthest end of the patio from Jacques's room. Jacques's room opened upon the gallery just above the steps.

Basil went back into the vestibule of his bedroom, through which he had to pass to get to the door, and despite the protestations of his valet, went out on the gallery.

"I've got to have air."

He smoked a cheroot in order to mitigate the onslaught of mosquitoes, and then sauntered down the gallery toward the front of the house. He passed the room adjacent to his, which, as his valet had said, was empty.

The next room was Ninon Juvenal's. There was a light in it, but the shutters were closed. That is to say, they were closed against any view from the outside, although they admitted the air.

Ninon was not in her room at the present moment, however; Boyean heard her voice as he walked softly past the third room, which was at the front end of the house. This was Amos Juvenal's. It, too, was lighted.

Low, excited voices drifted through the shutters. The girl was begging her father to go out on the gallery and see if anything was wrong. Apparently she felt something warning her. She said Jacques was in danger. They must go to him.

A gruff rebuke from her father, ordering her to return to bed, was all that Boyean heard, for he had not paused to eavesdrop.

THE young Creole walked on, encircling the patio, passing the "murder chamber" and reaching the room occupied by Jacques. For a moment a qualm caught him in the pit of the stomach, as if he had reached the edge of a precipice. He was looking down the adobe stairs, undecided whether to descend, wondering vaguely just where he was going.

He remembered. He had wanted air. His hands were hot, the wrists burned. He peered down the steps and looked into what he thought was a dense black shadow. He did not know what was there. Something about that shadow seemed to warn him.

Nevertheless, he took the first step downward. Immediately the shadow at the bottom of the steps came to life, taking form, and moving with astonishing rapidity through the garden. It was as if he had scared up a toad or some sort of a reptile which was fleeing into the ground.

The black form emerged the next instant in the light of the fanal at the front of the house, and Basil saw the ponderous figure of the cook. She disappeared under the *porte-cochère* the moment he recognized her.

He descended the stairs resolutely and went to the fountain, where he dipped his wrists into the water. The water was lukewarm, and yet it sent a shudder through him.

A moment later he was aware that the massive Negress had returned. But she was not alone. One of the patrolmen had entered the *porte-cochère*. Boyean stood up and lit a fresh cheroot.

"Beastly hot, *m sieu*," he remarked.

"It is that," the officer said. "But I'd rather be out here than in one of them rooms stuffed under a mosquito net."

"I'll stroll about a while and finish my smoke," Basil said. "Nothing happened as yet?"

"Nothin' except this old dame got scared when she seen you comin' down the steps. Hey, you, mammy! Get back to your room where you belong."

The great hulk, swathed in its usual guinea-blue dress, waddled across the flagstones and through the door.

The policeman returned to his post, and Boyean was left sitting on the adobe rim of the fountain, his hands again immersed wrist-deep in the warm water. His head was throbbing. He did not exactly remember what had happened.

He heard Ninon's voice, shriller and more importunate than before, but he could no longer understand the words. A glimpse of his valet—whose alpaca coat made a blot like ink against the brown wall—appeared on the gallery in front of Boyean's room. The half-breed was evidently distracted about his master's welfare, but he was not distracted enough to risk coming down into the patio for him. He had no intention of circling that gallery.

Suddenly the alert, spidery figure disappeared into the door, like a shadow sliding off the wall.

Some one else had come out on the gallery.

Basil looked up. The locusts were signaling again to their kinsmen on the levees. The sound drowned out the patter of tiny feet across the iron grillework above. But Basil could see a slim, graceful shadow moving across the gray plastered walls, past the windows of the room he had occupied the

previous night, past the windows of "the murder chamber," and then toward the door of Jacques Juvenal's room.

It was Ninon.

Boyeau heard the light tap of her knuckles on the door.

The door opened. She disappeared.

IMMEDIATELY the sound of voices—Ninon's and Jacques's—drifted down through the elephant-ear leaves of the banana tree at the foot of the adobe steps. Basil could not make out a single word; but the purport was unmistakable. The girl was frightened, importunate. The man's voice was soft, consoling.

It was not a lovers' meeting. It was more like the conflict between a mother and a refractory boy whom she adores. Boyeau had not yet seen any sign of romantic love between the two. But there was unmistakable affection in Ninon's attitude. It was for the most part the attitude of all the others of the household for this rich scion of the elder branch of the family.

The two remained in the room for some time, speaking now tenderly, now excitedly, now in conflict, both voices merging together in an indistinguishable jumble.

Basil guessed that they were talking over the two tragedies that had occurred in the family. He could guess that the girl was giving a highly tinged version of the second murder—not omitting a single one of the many clues which had brought her to her own conclusion—that Boyeau was guilty.

Without doubt, she was doing her best to convince Jacques of the truth of that hypothesis. Probably she had made the statement before, when the household watched Jacques eat his late

supper, and now she was driving her conviction home.

Actuated by a vital personal curiosity—knowing full well that he himself was the subject of that feverish controversy—Basil crept to the adobe steps. He remained secluded in the dark of the banana tree—in the very place where he had surprised Gumbo Lou, the cook.

Still he could hear no words.

He crept closer. He heard his name; a spasm of fear and anger gripped him. Red shafts, like knives, pierced him. His head swam. His ears throbbed with the deafening crescendo of the locusts, syncopated by the beating of his own throbbing temples.

The enormity of the crime—the ghastliness of the tragedy—the horror that was creeping about the house—settled down upon him like a suffocating cloud. He gasped, choked, put his burning forehead against the warm iron rail.

From a fit of violent dizziness, of terror, of a nightmare of nameless fears, he was shaken by two violently discordant sounds: the shrill staccato of the locusts cut off abruptly and leaving a silence that in itself seemed deafening, and then the throat-tearing scream of a woman!

Basil fled. He had reached the top of the adobe steps, and rather than climb down again into that cesspool of flowers and black shadows, he fled toward the nearest light. It was the light in one of the rooms on the gallery.

Nor did he stop when he reached it. He kept on, passing the gallery over the *porte-cochère*, and then on toward his own room.

He came up with a crash against the cowering and shrinking figure of his valet.

The garden and the house had

awakened to a tumult. From under the *porte-cochère* appeared the two patrolmen stationed at the front of the house.

At a door of the old slave quarters appeared the quadroon girl, like a furtive brown mouse.

And from Jacques Juvenal's door came the two cousins. Ninon was borne in the arms of Jacques, but immediately upon reaching the first band of light, Jacques sank to his knees. Ninon dropped easily to the floor of the gallery, where she lay.

"Help the little girl!" Jacques was crying. "Water. She's not hurt. Only in a faint. But water, *vite!* Uncle! Zozo!"

From where he stood at his end of the gallery, Basil could see a band of yellow light falling from the nearest window upon the figure of Jacques.

Jacques had fallen, helpless, to his knees. His shirt was torn open at the throat and his neck was streaked with blood!

CHAPTER X.

WHO DID IT?

IT was not until nine o'clock the next morning, when Detective Donnelly arrived, that Boyean heard the full story of what had happened.

Immediately after the incident there had been a general tumult through the house which lasted for an hour. Jacques and Ninon had been helped into Amos Juvenal's room. Servants ran back and forth with hot water, medicines, Barcardi rum, and coffee.

Two of the policemen had come in, and during the excitement they were busy quizzing each individual as to his whereabouts during the moment. Headquarters had been notified, and

two detectives of the homicide squad had gone through the same process of questioning as the men in uniform. A doctor had arrived.

And finally Basil found himself once again in his room, with his terrified valet sitting on the cot in the vestibule, all lights turned on, and the hubbub dying down.

Morning came. Basil believed he had slept. It was the sleep of utter mental and physical exhaustion. He called to his valet and ordered him to go down to fix some eggs *à la Turque*, with Creole coffee.

Amontillado went down to the kitchen like a man going to his execution, and he returned in a miraculously short time with a platter, bearing his master's favorite breakfast dish and a cup of coffee with brandy blazing on its surface.

Boyeau forced himself to eat. Then: "You saw what happened, Amontillado."

"*Oui, m'sieu'*. I see too moch. A man is come to zat door and his throat she are cut. And the woman she's face is w'ite like she die. I lak to leave from here, *m'sieu'*."

"You were up here on the gallery, I remember. I suppose you were worried about me."

"*Oui, m'sieu'*. You ac' verree fonnny laz night."

"What did I do? I remember I went down to the patio and talked with one of the patrolmen. Then I— What did I do then?"

"You come up dose stairway."

Boyeau paused a moment before the next question. When he spoke he tried to speak casually, but the effort was futile:

"Just where was I when they came out of the door—I mean the man with the bleeding throat and *ma'm'selle?*"

"You were at dose door yourself, *m'sieu'*. Me, I thought it was you at first."

"You thought what?"

"That it was you which 'ave the throat cut."

"Oh, no, you couldn't have thought that. I ran around the gallery and bumped into you just as they were coming out."

"But yes. It was juz before you bump to me, I think that way. Then you knock me down, and I thank the *bon Dieu* you are save'."

"But when the girl screamed, where was I?"

"You were there—at the door. Perhaps she is see you through the window, and she mak' wild bird cries like *zin-zin* or *cache-cache*."

"I doubt if she noticed me," Boyean snapped. "She saw what it was that had attacked her cousin. Can't you get a simple little idea like that into your head? Why do you say she saw *my* face? Why be so idiotic?"

"But you were right there, *m'sieu'*."

"And the murderer was there, too. Which do you think would throw her into that funk—the murderer or the sight of my face?"

THIS question was too much for Amontillado. He poured another cup of the coffee and chickory, and lit the spoonful of brandy on its surface.

"Whatever she is cry about," he grumbled between his teeth, "tha'z not my business. A verree bad place—thees domiceel. I lak verree moch go away from here and get some ozzer job."

"The police officers have arrived," Boyean said, returning to a gentler voice. "Nothing to be afraid of in the daytime."

"But anoizzer night—*non, 'cré bon*

sang de bon jour de bon Dieu!" He uttered the oath, of course, under his breath. He had a habit of hissing through his teeth, so that it was impossible to tell when he was laughing or swearing.

"I shan't ask you to stay in this house another night," Boyean assured him.

The interview was cut short by the appearance of the butler.

"The gentleman from the *Sûreté* is arrived, *m'sieu'*."

"You mean Donnelly?"

"Yes, *m'sieu'*. He is in the parlor with Maitre Jacques. And they both wish to speak with you, *m'sieu'*."

Boyeau attempted to gather his wits by gulping down the rest of his coffee and brandy and lighting a cheroot. He anticipated a very unpleasant interview. The deference which the police had shown him up until now would come to an end sooner or later. This man Jacques—who was something of a family champion—would put a stop to it.

He went downstairs with the expectation of being put through a very thorough third-degree examination.

The two men were in the parlor. Donnelly was seated, with his chubby legs and yellow unshined boots stretched out before him, his straw hat shoved back from the low forehead. Jacques was pacing up and down on the swamp-grass mats. His throat was bandaged.

"Good morning, *messieurs*," Boyean forced himself to say. "How is *mademoiselle* after last night's dreadful experience?"

"The doctor has managed to get her to sleep," Jacques answered quietly. "They tell me she laid awake all night. And no wonder."

"And how are you, *m'sieu'*?"

Jacques shrugged his shoulders and said nothing.

Donnelly answered. "The doc said he got out lucky. Juvenal dressed his wounds, washin' 'em up pretty thorough before the doc came."

"The doctor was very careful," Jacques deigned to explain. "He applied antiseptics and gave me a sedative. I slept a little. Do not worry about my health, *m'sieu*."

"I dare say you won't want to spend another night in this evil place," Basil suggested, "with all due respect to the fact that it is your ancestral home."

"We shall see," was all Jacques would vouchsafe.

"Now then, Mr. Boyean," Donnelly said, drawing his legs in and straightening up, "I told you last night I was goin' to make an arrest this mornin'. We were just waitin' for one more clew to tie up the case. An' it looks like we were on the right track."

"Last night's incident?" Basil murmured.

"Yes. That's what's fixed everything. Inspector will be here in a few minutes. But first I wanted to have a little chat with you. Mr. Jack here asked me as a personal favor to hear your opinion first."

"I MAY be of some help," Basil said. "I was out in the patio having a smoke. My room was insufferable, you may understand."

"Sure! We can un'erstan' that. But wait a minute. You ain't heard everything yet. The little girl, the mamoy-selle, well, she was spillin' a lot of peculiar remarks while the doc was tryin' to quiet her. She said she seen a hand reachin' into the room through the dark."

"The room was not exactly dark," Jacques explained. "I had my light

burning. I had not yet undressed. The shade of the gas lamp, which can be tipped for reading purposes, cut off the light from part of the room."

"The little girl says she seen a hand reachin' down through the dark—and indicatin' kind of toward this gentleman's neck. From behind, you un'erstan'?"

"Extraordinary!" Boyean exclaimed. "What sort of hand?"

"She couldn't explain any too well. She was sort of out of her head, you un'erstan'? The doc an' old Uncle Amos tried to get her to tell just where it come from—just what direction. Well, all as she could say, it was from the corner of the room—maybe from somewhere near the fireplace. Maybe from the window."

"In her mental condition at that moment," Jacques put in, "it is not to be supposed that she could have a very accurate idea of directions. Now, my back was to the window. It approached me from behind. But she said the hand came from nearer the fireplace."

"Could she by any manner of means recognize the hand, or give you some idea of what it looked like?" Boyean asked.

"That's the phony thing about it all," rejoined Donnelly. "She said it was kind of flabby-lookin'—an' yellow—an' wrinkled all up. An' yet after an hour or two, when she tried to remember more definite-like, why, she said it might have been black."

All three men pondered for a moment over this discrepancy. Boyean was thinking hard, furiously. He was the first to see a remote possibility that might bring the two opposing impressions into harmony.

"A Negro's hand is black," he suggested. "But the palm is not. Some-

times it is almost as light as a white man's hand. Quite often it is yellow."

Donnelly shook his head. "That's all very well. In fact, I had a look at the hands of all the servants. An' they are all just like you say, yellow un'erneath. The cook's is black as soot on top—an' fat enough at that. The maid's is yellow all over, an' un'erneath it's lighter 'n mine. Wasn't hers. Her hand ain't either fat or wrinkled."

"No, it couldn't have been the maid's," Boyean hastened to say. "I saw her coming out of the servants' quarters when the incident occurred."

"An' it weren't the butler's. His is wrinkled enough, but it's too scrawny. The way I figure it is this: The hand could of been white. I just examined the lamp in Mr. Jack's room, an' the pipe comes kind of low. If you stuck your hand just at the right height, why, it could be lit on the under side, whereas the back would be jet black. Don't that explain it?"

"It might," Jacques admitted with considerable reluctance. "But—"

"**B**Y the way," Donnelly inquired calmly, "just where were you at, Mr. Boyean—when you seen the maid comin' out of her room?"

"Can't tell exactly. My brain was in a whirl. I remember talking to the policeman. I remember sitting for a while at the fountain. Then I went up the stairs. Yes, now that I think of it, I was on the gallery—in front of the proprietor's room."

"H'm. You didn't look into his room—maybe?"

"Why should I be peeking into his room, Mr. Donnelly?"

Donnelly lit a cigar. It was one of the few times Boyean ever saw him with a full-length cigar. He had a habit

of letting it go out, chewing upon it, and relighting it until the match all but seared his lips.

"I think we better tell him, Mr. Jack, just how far we've got in our investigation."

Jacques began to pace again. His black brows were knitted. "It is a most distressing affair, *m'sieu'*. If we could only learn more! If you could tell us everything—all you know—all you have experienced."

"I think we better tell him a thing or two first," Donnelly said. "He knows most of it. The whole city knows most of it. But Mr. Boyean ought to know everything. He ain't any slouch in this business. The chief was tellin' me to let him have full rein in the house—thinkin' he might stumble onto somethin'. He is a Creole, like you folks. An' he can maybe stumble onto some leads which we can't."

"That has been my opinion," Jacques said, "although my cousin has some whims and ideas concerning your presence in the house, *m'sieu'*."

Boyeau flinched. But the detective came to the rescue, a broad smile gleaming in his golden mouth:

"Sure! The chief heard what she thinks, an' it gave him a good laugh. The two murders were committed by the same man—we all know that. Mr. Boyean was in Havana when your father was killed. We checked up on that yesterday."

Basil was staring, his mouth opened. He could make nothing of this interview. He had come expecting to be put through a third degree. When was Jacques Juvenal going to accuse him of the murder of his kinsmen?

"*Messieurs!* I beg of you!" Basil cried. "If you want my help, do not keep me in this torturing suspense any longer. Just whom do you suspect?"

Jacques wrung his hands. He stopped pacing, and turning to Boyean he breathed deeply, his fine athletic chest heaving as if with an inward pain. "M'sieu! Can I say it? They suspect my uncle!"

"Astounding!" Basil exclaimed. "It's too horrible to think for a moment that—" He wiped the perspiration from his forehead. "How can you imagine anything so horrible?"

"This house reeks with horror!" Jacques rejoined, sinking to a chair. "Nothing could be more horrible than what has already happened!"

He put his elbows on the table, and his head bowed, propped by his doubled fists. On the table before him there was an open book—the red plush album.

"Praise the *bon Dieu* that my mother will never hear of this!" Jacques exclaimed.

His mother's picture was looking up at him from the album. Evidently he had been pondering over the photographs that morning.

As for Basil, he groped for a chair, and sank into it, as if unable to stand under the impact of this unexpected revelation.

"It cannot be!" he was murmuring, half to himself. "It is something no man can believe."

"Well, the chief believes it, an' so do I. An' so does every one of the force who's been assigned to this case," Donnelly announced. "Reckon that's the chief's car now."

The detective got up and went to the door. "If you haven't anything to add to what you've said, Mr. Boyean—if you ain't seen or heard anything in this house that might weaken our case against Amos Juvenal, why, I reckon we'll make the arrest right now."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

U U U

As Dead as the Dodo

THE famous dodo has been dead for many years, the last known specimen having died in 1861. This bird was once plentiful on the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean, where it was discovered by a party of Portuguese sailors who landed on the island early in the sixteenth century. The first live birds were brought to Europe about a hundred years later.

The dodo was a bird about the size of a turkey with an ashy gray plumage that had a bluish tinge to it. There were a few yellow feathers in its tail and wings. It lived entirely on the ground, as its short stubby wings were useless. Most conspicuous was its enormous beak used for tearing the vegetable material on which it fed. Despite its size its voice was no louder than that of a gosling.

As the dodo was slow, sleepy and defenseless, it could be easily overtaken by a man on foot and killed with a club. Enormous numbers of them were slaughtered for food by sailors from passing ships. The bird laid, but one egg in a simple grass nest on the ground. Pigs that had been landed on the island and allowed to run wild soon made a habit of hunting out the dodo nests and eating the eggs. Naturally its numbers soon dwindled even more rapidly until finally, with the death of the last survivor, the dodo vanished from the earth forever.

John H. Spicer.



The Wild Pitch

Baseball was an innovation in the little Central American republic, but it took quick hold on Latin passions, with unexpected results for two visiting American hurlers

By *LIEUT. JOHN HOPPER*

"SANTA MARÍA!" exploded the little man. His long, thin fingers nervously twisted the waxed, upward-pointing ends of his generous mustache. His beady black eyes flashed with alarm at the girl across the table from him.

"He will not come!" the man continued, speaking jerkily in swift Castilian as he looked about the lounge of the Hotel Central, in Las Vegas. "He

does not care if we lose the game of the baseball."

The speaker struck his chest with his fist, and then flung his arm wide.

"Ah, no! All he care for is women! He even dare make love to my daughter—to a Linares who has not one drop of blood in her veins other than Spanish! Bah! These Americans!"

"Father! Father!" cautioned the

girl. "Do not excite yourself so! A baseball game... it is not worth it, for a Linares of Spain."

The old gentleman snorted. He was never sure that his daughter was not secretly laughing at him. It was because of that school in the United States to which he had sent her. She had learned things there which she never even would have thought of, if she had gone to a convent in Spain, as had Linares girls of past generations.

The dapper old man groaned.

"That I ever should have owned a team of baseballers!"

"But, father," soothed the girl, with a wicked twinkle in her black eyes, "it was you who brought the idea to our country. You said that the people were no longer interested in bull fights. You boasted that you would give the people of Costa Bella a new national pastime—after you saw how many thousands attended the game in New York, and how much money was made by the owners of the ball teams. You—"

Señor Linares made haste to cut off the innocent recital of his folly.

"Enough! I know, better than you, Carmen, that I alone have brought this cursed piece of misfortune to my door." He sighed gustily. He had initiated a baseball league in Costa Bella, and was sole owner of one of the teams. Now his indiscretions were coming home to roost with a vengeance.

"Ah, Carmen," he shook his head sadly, "if you had remained at home when that baseball player—"

"Oh, *mi padre!*" she laughed. The tone of her laugh was silvery, like a thousand tiny bells all being swayed by the same gentle breeze. "Do not be so—so archaic! Must I marry a man who may happen to escort me to a band concert?" Her eyes flashed dangerously. "He would be a fool to think so!"

"But that American does!" obstinately returned her father. "And unless I give my consent, he will throw no more balls for Las Vegas." The thought seemed to give the little man a pain in the head, for he suddenly clasped it with both hands. "Oh, oh! And we are equal with the team of Patillo! We have one more game to play to see who will be the champions of the league. And I have bet so much money! Oh, oh!"

"But he will come, my father," reassured the girl. "Of that I am sure. Then we shall see whether he will pitch the balls or not."

Small wonder that Carmen Linares was so sure! She was what you picture when you hear certain of Herbert's melodies. Her clothes proved that she realized she was in the tropics, where to wear more was not only prudish but also downright uncomfortable. Besides, the designer of those clothes must have had a firm belief that it was a shame to conceal lovely things.

She had eyes of jet night, a night with a moon somewhere not quite in sight. Skin of marble and rose. Hair, blue-black and curly, piled high on top of a dainty head, and surmounted with a lacy comb of jade green. Not even the most avaricious hold-out that baseball has ever produced would stay away from a conference which contained Carmen Linares as a member.

At two o'clock, of a burning tropical afternoon in Las Vegas, the capital city of the small Central American republic of Costa Bella, life ebbs to its most sluggish level. There is but an occasional passer-by on the narrow streets, whose dirty pavements seem to reflect a hundredfold the glare and the heat of the sun.

Perhaps there is some copper-hued, squat Indian, having finished his crude shopping, silently bound for his *cayuca* drawn up on the odorous water front; or, some dusky Jamaican, fat, swathed in a voluminous dress, and unconcernedly carrying on her head a basket containing the weekly wash of some *gran señor*.

Except for such as these, the inhabitants of Las Vegas are well content to seek the coolness of their homes and surrender to a *siesta*, or to sit lazily in some club, hotel, or bar, slowly sipping iced liquors. Usually, the conversation desultorily touches on one topic, and then on another. But, on this particular afternoon, it remained constant to one theme—baseball!

Excitement was as near to the fever pitch as it can get in the land of *mañana*—to-morrow. Organized baseball had taken an enthusiastic hold on the popular imagination, tired of lazy bulls and clumsy toreadors.

Las Vegas, the team owned and presided over by the diminutive but peppery Señor Linares, was favored to win. For, had it not, on its pitching staff, the greatest thrower of balls in all baseballdom? Señor "Mike" Flaherty, induced at great cost to leave his "Big League" team in the United States—how easily he had conquered these other teams, with their home talent, who had hardly seen a baseball before this year, and a few *Americanos* who had failed to make good even in their "bush" leagues. Poof! When Las Vegas met Patillo, there would be nothing to it!

Lucky for these loyal supporters of Las Vegas, eagerly and confidently wagering the proceeds of a full year's banana crop, that they could not see the perturbation of Señor Linares!

The lounge on this drowsy, humid

afternoon was almost deserted. Out of the many, little, round-topped, mahogany tables, only two were occupied. The adorable Carmen's thoughts were not on the rebellious twirler, Mike Flaherty. There was a very interesting-looking gentleman seated at that other table across the room. *Americano*, most surely! Who else would consume whisky straights at such an outrageous hour of the day?

His short, sandy hair stood straight up from his broad forehead, which glistened with tiny beads of perspiration. His deep blue eyes never once left the glass of liquor in front of him.

Carmen was piqued. It was rare indeed that a man, fortunate enough to have the chance, failed to stare at least twice at her.

But James "Lefty" Markham's thoughts were not in the lounge of the Hotel Central. As he glared sullenly into the glass before him, his mind's eye saw the velvet green of a perfect baseball diamond; a bounding, snow-white ball; the quick, precise movements of players; it saw grand stands jammed with thousands. He heard the tumultuous roar of thousands of voices shouting his name, pleading with him to win the game.

His tanned face contracted in a spasm of pain and self-disgust. What a fool he had been!

A MAN strode unsteadily into the lounge. He was tall, thin, muscular. His brown hair, growing down untidily at his temples, the nape of his neck, was ragged, unkempt. His face was flushed from liquor and passion.

"Hello, you sawed-off spic!" Mike Flaherty sneeringly greeted Linares.

Linares flinched. Carmen's eyes flashed dangerously.

Flaherty was at the table. He was bending intimately over Carmen. His gluttonous eyes lingered on the gentle rise of her breast. His liquor-laden breath nauseated her.

"'Lo, kid!" he murmured. "Made up your mind to step off with me yet? Hell, you're too damn nice for these spics around here! You need a man—to tame you, you tropical wild cat!" Flaherty laughed. "Jus' say the word, beautiful," he continued, "an' I'll wipe up the ground with those Patillo birds to-morrow. After that, it 'll be jus' you an' me, kid—eh?"

Linares, although small, was no coward. In his veins flowed the blood of the *conquistadores* of old Spain. By sheer force of will he kept himself from flying at the pitcher's ugly face.

Linares, like the rest of his countrymen, was a born gambler. In his enthusiasm, in his confidence, he had wagered more than he dared lose. But though ruin itself were to follow, the old Spaniard would not relent one iota in his ruling that the pitcher must cease making advances to Carmen.

"Weel you seet down?" he invited, his speech changing from liquid Spanish to accented English. "I have ask you here to tell you that I weel geeve you one t'ousand dollairs more eef you weel ween thees game to-morrow."

Flaherty waved a big paw derisively.

"Nothin' doin', funny-face. Money ain't got no inducements for me. Either Carmen an' me gets hitched or—no pitchee, see!"

He shoved his red face menacingly into the Spaniard's. His hand rose, and roughly tweaked an end of the *señor's* mustache.

"Stop!" Carmen had risen. Her voice carried clearly through the room and the sandy-haired American looked up from his glass.

"You beeg bum!" she cried, forgetting the perfect English she had learned at school. "You leave my father alone! He do not desire your worthless services to-morrow. Me, I despise you! You have the manners, but not even the honor, of the dog! Marree *you*—"

Her laugh, clear, courageous, contemptuous, pealed through the room.

That laugh stung Flaherty into fury. He grasped the girl, twisting and struggling, in his huge hands.

"Shut up!" he commanded. "You might be damn glad to marry me yet!"

LINARES jumped to rescue his daughter. He was a shade too late. Lefty Markham, crossing the room with great, catlike steps, placed a lean, brown hand on Flaherty's shoulder. Then he did that which was hardly visible to the eye. He simply contracted his fingers.

The pain in Mike Flaherty's shoulder speedily caused him to let loose his hold upon the girl, and whirl around. Eye to eye, the two men faced each other.

"Lefty Markham!" cried out Flaherty in astonishment.

"Well, well!" returned Lefty, in a slow, even drawl. "If it isn't old Mike Flaherty! Up to your old tricks again, Mike?"

Unconsciously, Carmen was rubbing her arms where Flaherty's horny fingers had dug. Her black eyes were big with wonder as she stared at this sandy-haired *Americano* who had intervened so opportunely, and so boldly. How handsome he was! And he had never even looked at her. Well!

"Listen, Markham," snarled Flaherty. "Barge along. This is my game. Hunt up one of your own, if you want one."

"Thanks!" returned the other cheerfully. "What gave you the idea I'd want to play in any game you're in? It does go against my grain, though, to see a lady manhandled by you. Now I suggest you take your face out of here."

Flaherty sneered.

"Why, you big rum-hound," he said. "You beat it, before I take a notion to crack you wide open. You got a helluva nerve to talk to me like that! I read in the papers how you got busted out of the National League because nobody could depend on you. Move along. You're hurtin' my eyesight."

Lefty Markham's eyes narrowed a hair's width. Flaherty failed to heed the danger signal, and stood there, his leering features thrust out pugnaciously.

There was a sudden, lightning-like movement, a sharp, clean crack—and Mike Flaherty described an arc in the air, and landed in an ignominious heap on the floor.

"*Bravo!*" murmured Carmen, turning her long-lashed eyes demurely toward Lefty. Her father was hopping up and down in his excitement. He did not know whether to rejoice at the discomfiture of his ball player, or to weep at the ruin of his prospects for the morrow's game.

Markham spoke grimly to the man slowly rising to his feet, and nursing his jaw with one hand.

"Listen, you scum! I didn't get kicked out of the Big Leagues because I was crooked, anyway. Now I'll give you just about five seconds to get out of here. If you don't—"

Flaherty's eyes were blazing with mad hatred. He pointed a vindictive finger at Markham's face.

"I'll get even with you later, buttinsky! As for you," he turned to Linares,

"you an' your ball team can go to hell! I'm playin' with Patillo to-morrow. They'll jump at the chance to get me. By the time I get through, you won't have enough dough left to buy a toothpick. An'," his voice became nasty, menacing, "that ain't all."

Casting a final glance of hatred at Markham, he turned, and strode out of the lounge.

THE Spaniard slumped dejectedly down in his chair.

"*Ay de mí!*" he moaned. "Eet ees bad enough that he weel not play for me, but now he goes to play weeth Patillo!" His voice took on a more pitiful tone. "Eet ees—how you call it?—that I shall become broke!"

Señorita Carmen Linares smiled guilelessly into a pair of blue eyes that were now regarding her with enough interest and appreciation to satisfy even herself.

"You play the game of the baseball yourself, *señor?*"

"I have played—a little," smiled back the man who, not so long ago, had been hailed by the press as "the greatest southpaw of all time."

"Perhaps you pitch, yes?" she asked archly.

Lefty Markham laughed outright.

"Am I to understand, lady," he said, "that you are offering me a job?" He found himself gazing deeply into twin midnight pools, which slowly dropped before his glance.

He extended his hand to press the bell button on the wall near the table. "Let's have a drink—to bind the bargain!"

A slim, cool hand closed over his, taking it gently from the button.

"You will not do this—for me?" she asked, her dark eyes searching his. "It is not good that you should."

Lefty knew that she meant it. For the first time in his life, some one had interfered between him and his weakness. Yet, somehow, he felt that she did it, not as others had so often done, on account of his baseball, but on account of himself. He looked into those black eyes studying him, encouraging him; and wondered.

UMPIRE TIM McLAUGHLIN used to be a beach comber. Before that lotus-eating period of his life, he had been an umpire. He had been forgotten long ago in New York, Boston, Philly, and Chicago, where he had been one of the first "scandals" of baseball. They said he sold a game, did it by a rotten decision. They kicked him out.

But it wasn't a guilty conscience that drove Tim out of the country, and on to the beach of Costa Bella. It was a knowledge of a monstrous injustice; for Umpire Tim knew that he had called his famous "mistake" as he had seen it.

Señor Linares had salvaged him. From somewhere, Tim had procured a suit of the traditional blue serge. No matter how scorching the rays of the tropic sun, he kept the coat tightly buttoned beneath his chest protector.

Now he stepped forward, short, thin, bony, and old. Off came the old blue cap, and dusted the home plate.

In Spanish, and then in English, he announced to the crowd in a high, thin voice:

"The batt'reez for t'-day's game: for Patillo, Flaherty and Jackson; for Las Vegas, Markham and Espinosa."

Greeting the umpire's announcement, a confused roar went up from the dilapidated, crowded grand stand, and from the motley throngs packed against the rickety fence all round the

field. The voices argued with one another. The umpire had made a mistake. Flaherty pitched for Las Vegas, not for Patillo.

Yet a strange pitcher, in the flashy red-and-white uniform of Las Vegas, was calmly walking to the box. Astonished, the spectators looked on. What had happened?

The many who had bet on Las Vegas began to clamor loudly. They had been fleeced—by Señor Linares, by Flaherty, by somebody. Backers of Patillo settled in their seats, and grinned. They, too, did not know why Flaherty was out in front of the grand stand, in the uniform of Patillo, calmly swinging a couple of bats over his shoulder. But they said nothing. Was it not bad fortune to look a gift horse in the mouth?

LEFTY MARKHAM a musedly pinched himself to make sure that he was not, after all, dreaming this fantastic scene. Why, it was but two short weeks ago that he had stood in the office of one of New York's largest stadiums, and heard his manager say the words that had brought him here! Those words! They still rang in his ears!

"Lefty, you're a damn good pitcher—probably the best fast ball southpaw the game has ever seen...when you're sober. But you ain't dependable. I gotta have a man that's dependable. You're too good to lose without tryin' to save. So, I'm gonna give you a chance. Take a vacation. Take the cure. If you can come back, an' show me you're off the stuff for good, I'll make it right with you. If not—" Here, the old manager had shrugged his shoulders. "But come on, kid! Give it a whirl. You're too clean a youngster to fall for that stuff. Some-

body's just been giving you a wrong steer, that's all."

"A wrong steer" was right! At last Lefty Markham realized that. Realized it ever since Carmen Linares had placed her soft, compelling hand upon his, in the lounge of the Hotel Central.

A burst of martial music interrupted Markham's thoughts. In the center of the grand stand, a band had begun to play. The crowd was rising to its feet. Cheers, *vivas*, gathered volume. *El presidente* of the Republic of Costa Bella, with his party, was descending the center aisle leading to the vacant boxes in front.

Lefty's heart skipped a beat. It was impossible to miss her. Even among the superbly gowned women of the presidential party, Carmen stood out, in beauty, in grace, and in carriage. Beside her strutted her diminutive father, casting worried glances about him. To-day would make or break his fortune.

The bowing and scraping, the placing of chairs, the moving about in the boxes, had been completed at last. Time for the game to begin.

The lean, sun-blackened umpire, in his best professional league voice, dryly called, "Play ball!"

Patillo was at bat.

Lefty cast a last glance toward the grand stand. A white arm fluttered in the air, telegraphing encouragement. There she was, with her father beside her, seated in the first row of the first box on the left of the president's.

Lefty spat, as he toed the mound. It was hot. The pitiless tropical sun glared down from the cloudless blue sky. It seemed to sizzle, to fry all things under its burning rays. New York, in August, was a refrigerator compared to this, thought Lefty. Water dripped from his face and his chest.

It was hard to breathe deeply of the stifling air. An uneasy thought flashed through his mind. Would he be able to withstand this terrific heat, to last out the game?

A tense silence had settled over the field. A man was at bat, waiting for him—a browned, hard-visaged American, some Wandering Jew of a ball player.

Lefty gritted his teeth, and took his wind-up. There was more at stake than just a shabby ball game in a blistering, half forgotten country buried in the tropics. There was his future. If he conquered now, the degrading weakness which had brought him there would be forever conquered. That he knew, down in his heart.

He had read the message in Carmen's dark eyes. She had faith in him, and, if he justified that faith—those eyes had said that he might look for another victory.

Markham breathed deeply. Even the prejudice of Carmen's father against all those not of Spanish blood might be largely overcome. A man cannot hold much of a prejudice against the savior of his name and fortunes—particularly if his daughter looked with favor upon that savior.

A jeer cut across the diamond.

"Whatcha doin', Markham?" came Mike Flaherty's voice. "Posin' for the slow motion movies? You're goin' through a game to-day that you ain't goin' to forget. An' what's comin' after—that ain't nobody's business. Ho, ho!"

The new white ball streaked to the plate.

"Stri-i-ike!" The sonorous word floated upward on the heat waves.

The batter looked a little dazed. He had heard of such speed, but he had thought it just another fairy tale of

the Big Leagues. He grasped his bat anew. The next time—

But the "next time" was continued, perforce, to the next. And the next batter fell as swiftly.

The fallen spirits of those who had placed their money upon Las Vegas rose again. Here was another pitcher like unto the great Mike Flaherty himself. Some declared that he was better; others, who had seen the redoubtable Mike in action too many times, reserved their opinions—and still worried. The Patillo supporters were silent. Who was this man? And why had Flaherty joined their team at the last minute? They cast suspicious glances at the Las Vegas. Had Patillo been framed after all?

IT was a pitchers' duel. Inning after inning slid by so rapidly that it was hard to believe that the game was over half gone. Lefty was pitching air-tight baseball. But so was Flaherty.

That Flaherty was good, even Lefty himself could not deny. If his crooked tendencies had not driven him out of American baseball, he would still be worrying the .300 hitters.

Markham had the speed. Flaherty had the curves, the tricks. It was just that: a contest between a fast, straight ball, placed exactly where the thrower willed it; and a slower, curved ball, which seemed to go here, and went there.

The end of the fifth inning. The score board, at the far side of the field, still carried a double row of goose eggs.

Lefty was going to the mound, Flaherty was coming in to bat. Mike paused. A knowing leer spread over his jagged, red features.

"Pretty hot, ain't it?" he taunted. "I can hold 'em. *Can you?*" This

country down here gets you, when you ain't used to it."

He laughed uproariously into Markham's grim, set face, and then turned on his heel and walked away.

Lefty's teeth clenched together. The wily Flaherty, experienced, had thrust his finger into Lefty's mind. Flaherty could "hold 'em"; long ago he had become acclimated to the marrow-drying heat of the tropics. An extra inning game would be just a little longer time on the diamond for him. But for Lefty—

Even this early in the game, the heat had begun to tell on him. Could he last? The dazzling speed of his pitched balls cost effort. Plenty of it.

Again he toed the mound. Again his eyes sought the box to the left of the president's. He could make out a girl's face, anxious; her great, black eyes full on his face, sympathizing, trying to help.

It seemed as though strength flowed from her cool, courageous self to him. Calmness possessed him. He had to win. He had to.

He faced the batter.

Two were down, and the third was swaggering up to bat.

Swinging his bat confidently, Flaherty addressed the pitcher he was facing, "Put her over, big boy! Put her right there! Got your number now! Put her over—if you got the nerve!"

There was silence on the field. The crowd leaned forward, waiting. Crowds are psychic. They seem to divine in advance the unexpected, the unusual happenings. A "break" was in the air.

Lefty felt it, as he had felt it many times on many other diamonds. His fingers tingled. There was not going to be a break. Such things win, or lose, games. He prepared to hurl his

speediest ball—close in to the body of the batter, and just a little below the shoulders.

As a detached spectator, as in a daze, he saw the thing happen, the break occur.

FLAHERTY, with a set smile on his face, took a step backward as the ball left the pitcher's hand. There was a sharp crack of bat meeting ball, and Flaherty was off on a desperate run. The throngs in the grand stand, along the fences, as one, rose to their feet. Unmistakable groans involuntarily issued from throats in the Las Vegas sections.

High, high, higher...ever into the sun, mounted the small, white sphere. It became a gleaming speck. The center fielder was racing back toward the fence. He hesitated, glanced backward over his shoulder, then tore on again, faster than before.

Flaherty had reached first, rounded it, and was dashing to second.

In Lefty's chest, something was growing colder by the second. He felt that a pair of eyes were upon him. Not on the player rushing so futilely to make a stab at the ball, but upon him, the pitcher who had thrown the ball, the man in whom she had placed her trust. He could not turn to look into those eyes. He never would be able to look into them again.

The tiny ball was descending, dropping inexorably. There were hearts praying in the grand stand.

The center fielder and the ball reached the same spot at the same instant.

A great shout smote the heavens. He caught it! The shout was cut short, as if some omnipresent hand had been suddenly clapped over the exulting mouths. The fielder's pace had been

too much for him to overcome. He had not had time to get a balance. The ball struck his glove. He juggled it, striving desperately to hold on to it. Useless. The ball dropped from his grasping fingers to the ground. But, like a flash, he snapped it up, faced about, and hurled it from him with all his might. Then, he looked to see where he had thrown the ball.

Lefty was on the line between second base and third. Flaherty thundered past him. The ball was coming—slowly, oh, so slowly!

Flaherty rounded third—and the ball entered Lefty's glove. Flaherty had taken a couple of long strides toward home, when he heard the warning cry of the coach off third. He wheeled about clumsily, and dug in his spikes to get back to third.

Lefty threw.

It seemed that the runner and the ball arrived at the same instant.

Breathless, every soul awaited the decision. Dryly, without hesitation, it came.

"Safe!"

THE crowd sat back once more, and began to breathe normally. Mike

Flaherty dropped his exhausted body down on the third base sack, hugged his knees, and looked at the man in the pitcher's box.

"Well, Markham!" he taunted. "What do you think of that, huh? Now, watch me get in, an' make the run that's goin' to win this old ball game. Guess you won't rate with the *señorita* now. Back to the bush leagues and the bootleggers for you, brother."

Lefty didn't hear. He didn't care. There was hope in his breast. A man on third, with two out, was not so bad. He had been in worse holes than this.

Yet, a hit meant a run. True, he had

little to fear of the batter now facing him. Yet sometimes—

"Strike one!"

"Ball one!"

Flaherty was dancing off third, jeering.

Could he catch him? No, cautioned experience. Better play the batter.

"Ball two!"

The crowd was again tense, watching with strained eyes and fast beating hearts. Surely, the batter was no match for this whirlwind pitcher. Would Flaherty attempt a steal? Why didn't he? Why? He was way off third now.

"Strike two!"

Lefty rubbed the ball speculatively into his glove. Flaherty was away off third, dancing back and forth. The third baseman was sneaking in, anxious, nervous, expectant.

One more pitched ball, and the batter would be done for. Yes. That was best. Still...

Lefty made a movement toward the box. From the corner of his eye, he saw Flaherty raise his right hand over his head, and hold it there motionless for several seconds.

The action puzzled Lefty. Was that a signal? He racked his brain for some parallel he had seen in baseball. Did it mean an attempt to steal? For the batter not to strike at the ball?

Lefty gave it up, and prepared to throw the last ball.

He was almost through his swift wind-up when he saw a brilliant flash of sunlight in the box on the left of the president's.

Not a second did the pitcher wait. With that deadly aim and terrific speed that had made him the terror of big league baseball, he hurled the ball straight at the box.

It all happened so quickly, the ball

traveled so fast, that it was all over before any one realized what had been attempted. So intent had all eyes been on the runner between third and home, that none had seen the ragged, evil-appearing native, one of those crazed half-breed creatures that abound in tropical countries, ready to cut the throat of their own or any one else's grandmother, for enough silver to buy them stupor brought on by native rum. No one noticed him rise stealthily from his place behind the box where sat Señor Linares and his lovely daughter.

But the pitcher, out in his box on the field, had seen a blazing shaft of the sun strike the blade of the knife held high and behind the back of Señor Linares.

All about, there was tumult. Patillo had scored. Flaherty had crossed home plate on Markham's wild pitch. The spectators were wild. Patillo rooters were wild with joy, Las Vegas frenzied with rage. This unknown pitcher, this thief, had thrown the game! He had deliberately tossed the ball into the grand stand. He was wise, that one! No catcher in the world could retrieve a ball from the grand stand in time to catch a runner from third. The shouts became louder, more menacing.

In the box to the president's left, there was tumult, too. Women screamed, and drew back. Men surrounded, and looked down upon the unconscious would-be assassin. There was a large, round, red spot squarely in the center of his forehead, just above the bridge of his crooked nose. A few feet away lay the long, ugly knife.

Sheepish, fearful police, who had been told off to guard the presidential party, came to bewildered life sufficiently to hold off the curious crowd

about the boxes, and to remove the dirty, limp body.

From underneath him, a dirt-stained baseball came into view. Involuntarily, all eyes turned to the pitcher's box.

BUT the pitcher was not in his position. With long, powerful strides, he had crossed the diamond, overtaking Flaherty who was swaggering to his seat on the bench beneath the grand stand.

Before the astonished gaze of all, Lefty seized his opponent by the shoulders, and faced him about.

"You low-down hound!"

Lefty's blue eyes were blazing. His face was red with anger.

"I saw the signal," he continued.

"You—you murderer!"

The game was stopped. Players came tumbling up from the benches, in from the diamond.

Flaherty turned a surprised, amazed face to the world. It seemed to say, "This poor boob is crazy!" He faced Lefty.

"I don't get you, brother!" he said, and then laughed. "Sure, I murdered the game for you, if that's what you mean. But it, hardly calls for this, does it? I thought you were a baseball player—not a kid."

"You know damned well what I mean, Flaherty!" gritted Lefty, through clenched teeth. "You planted that guy in the grand stand. You paid him to bump off Linares at your signal. These people down here may not know you, but I do."

"What d'y' mean?" blustered Flaherty, doubling his fists, and taking a step forward.

The steely blue eyes before him never wavered.

Umpire Tim McLaughlin stepped between the two pitchers.

"Snap out of it!" he barked. "Play ball!"

"I protest against the counting of that run!" argued Lefty. He went on to explain his wild pitch.

"I thought so," sneered Flaherty, when Lefty had finished his recital. "Tryin' to bellyache, 'cause he's losin'. Why don't you throw the bum sport out of the game, ump?"

"Shut up—you!" Umpire Tim shot at Flaherty. Turning to Lefty, he continued in a kinder tone, "Sorry, Markham, but the run has to count. The rule book allows no excuses for wild pitches. And we're going to continue this game. Got a message from the president himself saying to go on. So, out in the field, boys."

The players departed, until there were but three left in the group—Lefty, Flaherty, and Tim McLaughlin.

"Listen, Flaherty," said Lefty calmly, but with emphasis, "you've been too long down here in these parts. I'd ask you to leave now, but I want the pleasure of beating you this game. But, after the game... if these people don't run you out, I will. Get me?"

Hate mingled with fear on Flaherty's face as he watched the back of the retreating pitcher. He knew that what Markham had promised, he would surely carry out, or attempt to, at least.

Flaherty was perturbed. Mentally, he cursed the clumsy thug he had hired. If the fool had been more careful, Markham would not have seen the knife. It would have been all over. The game won, old Linares tucked away, the girl unprotected.

But now, Markham knew. Of course, it would be impossible for him to prove that a base runner on the diamond had anything to do with a rum-crazed native in the grand stand, but—

Flaherty cursed further, and spat a

brown stream into the dust, and racked his brains. There must be some way out of this. He had to think fast.

IN his box, Señor Linares sat very erect, very white, and trembling not a little. His daughter's arm was through his, clasping it firmly to her. The father kept his eyes straight to the front, courageous but unseeing. He was thinking of death, of the lost game, of the money he had lost. His daughter, meanwhile, never let her eyes stray, for a single instant, from one face out there on the field.

Señor Linares was not the only person whose nerve was shaken. There was another—down on the field. Pitcher Flaherty.

Las Vegas approached to bat; and the end of the sixth saw the game tied. Flaherty had been more perturbed than even he himself thought he was. Before he could steady himself, before his control returned, he had walked two men. Another had hit safely. And another.

By sheer force of will, Flaherty forced himself to his normal pitching. But the damage was done; a run had been made, and Patillo and Las Vegas stood tied.

Once more, the tightest of baseball, a grim, unyielding, perfect battle between pitchers.

The end of the ninth came at last. Lefty was the first Las Vegas player to approach the plate.

His arm ached. It felt twice its normal size, and seemed to be filled with lead. He was tired, tired. These nine innings had taken more out of him than an eighteen inning game back home. The sun—that everlasting heat—there was no escaping it.

His face was grim, his jaw was set, as he faced Flaherty. Something had

to be done, and done now. Flaherty was good for several innings more, while he, Lefty, knew that he was done. From now on, his pitched balls would have less speed. They would insist perversely in going where they had not been directed. It would only be a matter of time before the Patillo team got to such pitching, and then—

It was now, or never.

For the first time in his life, Lefty spoke to the opposing pitcher.

"After the game, Mike," he said softly, "I'm going to be tickled to beat hell out of you."

A look of surprise shot across Flaherty's face, which immediately darkened in hate. He wound up viciously, and shot the ball to the plate.

"Ball one!" droned the umpire.

Lefty had not made the slightest attempt to get ready to swing. A smile was on his face. A fixed, irritating smile.

Flaherty toed the mound again.

"After I get through with you," the soft, familiar drawl came from the batter's box, "I guess I'll let the mob have you. Isn't this the country where they put 'em up against a wall, and shoot 'em?"

Again the ball plunked into the catcher's mitt.

"Ba-a-a-all two-ah!"

"I protest!" cried Flaherty, striding toward home plate. "This man ain't got no right to talk to me like that!"

Umpire Tim McLaughlin wearily removed his mask, and stepped forward. His brown eyes stared unemotionally into Flaherty's flushed, harassed face.

"I didn't hear nothin'," he said, "Play ball."

Flaherty cursed until tiny pin-points of light in Umpire Tim's eyes flashed dangerously.

"I'll get you yet!" snarled the pitcher to the batter, as he turned and strode to the mound.

This time, he was in the middle of his wind-up when that smooth voice trickled treacherously into his ears.

"I've heard they're terrible shots down here. Muss a man up something awful. Don't kill him the first time, either."

"Ba-a-a-all three!"

The ball was returned gently by the catcher, who gave a warning shake of his masked head.

But Flaherty was beyond being cautioned. No sooner had he the ball in his hands, when he hurled it with all his strength at the head of his tormentor, who ducked barely in time.

Umpire Tim's dry voice floated out across the diamond.

"Ba-a-a-all fo-ah! Take your base!"

WITH his knuckles at his hips, ball in one hand, glove on the other, Mike Flaherty squinted his hate-filled eyes at the man on first.

He had been tricked into giving a pass. He cursed himself for a fool. He was getting light-headed to let a batter talk himself into a walk. But a runner on first was a long way from home. He'd get the next three men.

"Say, Mike,"

That damned voice!

"I'm going to take second on this throw. Better be careful."

Rage welled higher in Flaherty's breast. He would take second, would he? Let him try it!

And Flaherty threw the ball. He intended to throw it just high enough so that his catcher would have no difficulty in making the peg down to second to catch the runner. But again Flaherty's temper was his undoing. The pitched ball was high, all right.

Too high. By a prodigious leap, the catcher managed to spear it. He made a motion as if to throw to second, but thought the better of it; no use, the runner was almost to the bag.

"I told you so," announced Lefty calmly. "Flaherty, I'm going to steal this ball game right out from under your nose. Third is next. And then, home."

"Like hell!" gritted the pitcher.

Again the spectators watched breathlessly the struggle between two giants of baseball. In addition to his pitching fame, Markham had earned not a little reputation for being a daring and successful base stealer. Now he was pitting his wile and his speed against a pitcher who had become as jealous of a base as a miser of his gold.

Although Lefty danced precariously back and forth off the second sack, Flaherty merely kept his grim eye upon him, and played the batter.

Lefty knew that he had to take desperate chances. But if he got caught off the bag, the last hope for Las Vegas would be gone. Lefty knew his arm.

He prayed for a break.

One out.

Two out.

The third man up to bat.

Flaherty turned, and grinned at the man on second. Then he faced the batter.

The crowd leaped to their feet, shrieking. Markham was streaking it to third! He was almost there!

"Foul ball. Strike one!" announced the umpire, and waved Lefty back to second.

Involuntarily, Flaherty breathed a huge sigh of relief. Lucky he faced such dumb batters!

Lefty had just reached second again. He stood there, dejectedly. His shoulders slumped. His furious dash to

third had left him spent and breathless. Once more Flaherty grinned his triumph at his enemy. This inning was about over.

He toed the mound, commenced his wind-up.

The yells of the crowd told him what was happening. As soon as the pitcher had faced about, Lefty had dropped his lethargic pose, and was off like a flash for third.

Just as quick, Flaherty hurled the ball to the waiting third baseman... and cursed himself for doing it.

The crowd groaned. It was too easy. Markham did not have a chance. The third baseman grinned as he shoved the ball against the chest of the oncoming runner. Still Lefty continued on, touched third, and waited.

"Safe!" indicated Tim McLaughlin, to the amazement of the spectators. "Pitcher balked."

With an effort Flaherty played to the batter. Another strike. Two outs, and a man on third.

Markham's laugh was gall and wormwood to the small soul of Mike Flaherty. He knew what that laugh contained—ridicule, derision for a man of Flaherty's baseball caliber who would make such a bonehead play, even if it was caused by Mike's fanatic desire to catch his hated rival.

The pitcher faced the batter once more. From the corner of his eyes, he saw Lefty preparing to make the dash for home. Flaherty gave no heed. One more strike was all that was wanted. And this last ball was going to be a strike—the last.

Crack!

So totally unexpected was the hot grounder that came bounding toward him, that Mike messed it with his glove, juggled it with his hands.

One man crossed home plate. 'Another crossed first.

Immediately, the grand stand became a frenzied place. Las Vegans pounded one another on the back, and shouted, "*Viva el Señor Markham! Viva!*"

The game was over. And on the red-and-white banner of Las Vegas perched victory.

OUTSIDE the ball park waited a long, low limousine. On the rear seat sat a man and a girl.

"But he will come, *mi padre!* I am sure of it!" said the girl.

Her father looked into her eyes, and heaved a gusty sigh. They told why she was so sure. Oh, well. He sighed again. Things were so different now.

A tall, sandy-haired youth issued forth from the dilapidated gate of the park, and walked rapidly toward the car. As he approached, the girl noted that although one blue eye looked at her as meaningly, as brightly as ever, the other was partially closed, and edged with red.

His smile, as he greeted them, was not as broad as usual. Split lips are rather unmanageable.

"Left-ee!" she cried. "What is it that you have been doing?"

He stared down at the ground guiltily, and began to rub one toe into the dirt in an embarrassed manner.

"Nothing," he finally stated. "Just helping the country to get rid of an undesirable alien, I guess."

"Come!" broke in Señor Linares grandly. "We mus' go to our club, and drenk the sparkling champagne in a toast to thees mos' won'erful day!"

"Okay!" agreed Lefty Markham, never taking his eyes from Carmen's face. "But—make mine ginger ale."

THE END.



*Coquettishly the Spanish girl displayed
a bare shoulder*

The Wrong Kind of Money

When the Secret Service runs afoul of the corrupt power of a practical politician, unexpected things are more than likely to happen to all concerned, as Jack Frisby and Laura Felton find

By FRED MACISAAC

Author of "Run, Dan, Run!" "The Mental Marvel," etc.

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

DENNIS KYLE, practical politician and uncrowned ruler of the New England city of Bolton, has several irons in the fire; and one is getting too hot to hold, with Patrick Cassidy, Internal Revenue agent, on the trail of James Charlton's dope ring.

But in city politics Kyle keeps busy, getting his profit out of all public improvements. He gets a useful assist-

ant in Laura Felton, Vassar girl, who determines to enter practical politics to support her mother. She finds a friend and an interested student of politics in the writer, Jack Frisby. But when Kyle has Laura act as go-between with some one in New York, Frisby tries to interfere.

Pat Cassidy has been murdered, almost at the moment Frisby was ring-

This story began in the Argosy for April 26.

ing his old school chum's bell. Kyle uses his influence to clear Frisby of immediate suspicion of the murder; but the boss himself gets caught in a lie which links him with the drug ring. And when Frisby follows Laura to New York, the Secret Service chief, Morgan, calls Frisby into his office. It seems that the suspected dope smuggler Charlton has been seen leaving Laura's hotel room.

Frisby convinces Morgan that Laura is indiscreet rather than criminally involved; and to clear her, he agrees to Morgan's suggestion that he act as an under cover man for the Secret Service, in Bolton.

The sealed "candy box" package which Laura was supposed to bring from New York to Kyle disappeared from her hotel room. But it was returned to her in Bolton, by express, and Kyle pays Laura off, and enthralls her over an organization of working girls which he wants her to start. Kyle knows government investigators took the package, but found nothing incriminating.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN ODD BOOK AGENT.

UNLIKE many writers, Jack Frisby had never worked as a newspaper reporter and lacked the technique of investigation which is acquired in that trade. He had begun writing stories in college and persisted despite editorial rejection of his work, until he found a market. He had a vivid imagination which enabled him to produce plausible tales about subjects regarding which he knew very little, and he had been earning a fair income when he determined to sacrifice a year to the production of a big novel.

The novel was to be a realistic tale of conditions in a typical American city, and he had made little progress with it up to the time that Laura Felton called upon him for the purpose of buying his home. He had grown up on Crest Street and had a general idea of social and political conditions in the neighborhood, but he had never made a serious study of them. Nor had he found a central theme for his novel.

But when he came out of the city jail, he had his plot well defined. His book would be built around a character like Dennis Kyle and its moral would be the necessity of reorganizing American city life so as to eliminate criminal parasites of this sort.

He had determined to delve into the underworld of Bolton, discover its methods and practices, and emerge with positive proof of the connection between Kyle and the dope ring. He would simultaneously expose the boss and at the same time secure material for a novel which would be great because it was true. He felt no gratitude to Kyle for opening the prison doors for him this second time. Kyle had been actuated by no unselfish purpose. However, he was tactful enough to thank Kyle and to appear to be taken in by his appearance of good will.

"I'm doing this for you because Miss Felton asked me to," said Dennis.

"You're a nice kid but you ought to learn to mind your own business. You went down to New York after her because you knew I sent her there, and you cost her a good job. I like Laura but she won't do in politics. She had no right to tell you the kind of work she was doing for me. Maybe you can find her a better job, young fellow."

"I'll certainly try," replied Jack with a smile. He was delighted to learn

that Laura was no longer in the employ of Dennis Kyle—not knowing Kyle's plans. "I have suggested that she learn typewriting and act as my secretary."

"Well, that's all right unless she finds something better. I've got a lot of things to attend to, Frisby, so I'm going along. You better not leave town until this Cassidy inquiry is over."

"I won't," Jack assured him.

If he had not had positive knowledge that Kyle had sent Laura to New York to act as his means of communication with a notorious dope smuggler, the manner of the politician would have impressed Frisby. Dennis shook hands warmly and started off down the street, looking for all the world like a harmless genial glad-hander. Jack could not understand how a man who was so prosperous in his own game, politics, should risk the vengeance of the law by meddling with narcotic smuggling.

The risk that Laura so innocently had run caused anger to burn deep within Jack. He stared savagely after Kyle. In some way he would bring the big hypocrite to book, and speedily, he hoped.

However, Jack Frisby did not know how to go about his task. In his whole life he had never seen a dope fiend, nor had he ever encountered a transaction in the cocaine, morphine, or heroin trade. He had been astonished when Pat Cassidy had informed him that the traffic was worse in Bolton than in any big city and the dopesters more powerfully organized.

He knew the symptoms of a dope victim in a general way, extreme pallor, wild eyes, twitching lips and hands; but it was hard to believe that selling their drug to such people was

profitable enough for the man who ran the city.

FRISBY returned to his home and realized instantly that it had been entered during the night and ransacked. He assumed that the police had searched the place after his arrest in hope of finding evidence that he had been mixed up in the Cassidy murder. The intruder had made no effort to conceal the results of his search. Everything was topsy-turvy. Frisby spent half an hour restoring order. This done, he took down the encyclopedia and spent half an hour reading its article upon opium and derivative drugs.

It was dull if informative, and he laid the book down and yawned. At last he went out on the porch and sat in the hammock and smoked three cigarettes in succession.

A motor car went by, big and shiny and new. Jack recognized the driver as Doc Horne who ran the pharmacy on the corner of Locust and Hanby Streets. The Doc lived three doors up on Crest Street. Frisby sat up and a spark of interest came into his eyes.

Horne's drug store was a small, dirty, repulsive shop. He had turned in there once to get a soda and walked out again because the soda fountain looked poisonous. The Hornes until a year or two ago had been very poor, but last year they had put an addition on their house and painted it and they bought an automobile—not this one, either. This was a new car which sold at twenty-eight hundred dollars.

He saw the Doc turn into his driveway and run the car into the garage after which he emerged and went into his house. How the deuce could the owner of a filthy little drug store afford to buy a car like that? The car which

he must have turned in for it wasn't more than a year and a half old.

Probably he sold booze, or—maybe he sold dope.

Frisby leaped to his feet in his excitement. Dope it was. He remembered now that a pale, pasty-faced woman with trembling hands had been standing at the soda fountain the day he went into Horne's and that her repulsiveness had had something to do with his precipitate departure from the store. A drug addict!

Horne was a mean little man, and Jack thought him capable of embarking in such a traffic. No doubt there were such druggists all over the city who sold narcotics without a prescription. The total of their business must be very imposing, enough to pay Dennis Kyle a very large sum as his share of the profits. Well, he was glad that Laura was through with the brute.

He telephoned to Laura who was home and joyful because he was again at liberty.

"Kyle told me he was through with you, Laura," said the writer. "That's the best news I've heard in many a long day. I'd teach you to run a typewriter myself only you need the touch system and I'm a two-finger artist. It won't take you long, though."

"I'm sorry, Jack," the girl replied, "but I have already secured a position."

"Oh, really?"

"Yes, I start Monday in the personnel department of the telephone company."

"Is that worth while?"

"Why, I hope so. I'm to have a chance to do useful work and very shortly shall earn a good salary."

"I certainly am delighted. It's a load off my mind. How did you get it?"

She hesitated. "Through a friend

of mine," she said nervously. Jack misunderstood her nervousness. The friend, he thought, must be her fiancé, Flemming.

"I congratulate you. Well, when may I see you?"

"Well, not for a few days. I'm going to be busy."

"I understand," he said regretfully. "I'll call you soon again."

Laura was relieved to hang up. She had permitted him to assume that she was through with Dennis Kyle. She had agreed to conceal her further connection with the politician, but she hated to deceive and evade with Jack Frisby who was her sincere friend and well-wisher.

She told herself that she would have broken with Kyle had he not offered employment which was honorable and congenial. If Jack knew all the facts, he could not blame her for undertaking to organize the Working Girls' League, but his prejudice against the politician was so great that he would be suspicious even of a really noble enterprise. Better not to meet him for a while.

FRISBY thought he understood her evasion of his request for an engagement. Flemming had come forward with welcome assistance, and he and Laura would be spending their evenings together. Well, if it made her happy to be with that big snob, he was glad. Perhaps, now that everything was all right, he had better drop this Secret Service business. He didn't have the first instinct of a detective, and he ran the risk of getting the same treatment as poor Pat Cassidy.

Like most people, the young writer's zeal for public service had a personal motive behind it, the safeguarding of Laura Felton; and with Laura out of Kyle's sphere of influence, his enthu-

siasis was rapidly waning. He got back to his novel and pounded out three or four pages which he read over and destroyed. The book certainly was not marching forward very fast.

About the middle of the afternoon he had a caller, a man with a walrus mustache and hair in need of tonsorial attention, a swarthy complexion and a brief case from which he produced a prospectus of an encyclopedia. He found Jack on the porch and insisted upon flourishing the prospectus despite Frisby's insistence that he was not in the market for condensed knowledge.

"Take the prospectus and be looking it over while I talk to you," said the visitor. "I'm Morgan."

Jack stared at him in astonishment and recognized him by his eyes.

"I want to keep your connection with us a secret," Morgan explained, "and I assumed you had lots of canvassers calling on you."

"An average of three or four a day," said Frisby with a chuckle.

"Right. I am trying to sell you a set of books in full view of the neighborhood, and I have already called on two other residents of this street. Frisby, my man trailed Charlton back to the Giltmore Hotel and saw him enter Miss Felton's room with a small package under his arm. He came out five minutes later without it. The operative obtained admission to the room, made a search and found the package in Miss Felton's suitcase. He carried it away with him."

"So that's what became of it," exclaimed Frisby.

"Yes," said Morgan. "He brought it to me and we opened it. It contained about ninety thousand dollars in Treasury and Federal Reserve certificates."

Jack whistled softly.

"There were no documents of any

sort in the box, nothing to explain the payment. It was very embarrassing."

"Embarrassing for Miss Felton, of course."

"And for us. The money was of no value to us. We were placed in the position of having robbed a young woman of ninety thousand dollars after breaking and entering her hotel room. We had no evidence against her to justify our action and a Secret Service man has no more right to enter a person's abode and search his effects than anybody else. Furthermore, we have no proof that the money in the package in the young lady's suitcase was placed there by Charlton. My man says it looked like the same package and he took a chance."

"You pulled a boner, then."

"On the contrary," smiled Morgan, "it was a fine piece of work. We have learned from you that Miss Felton was employed by Dennis Kyle and the entrance of Charlton into her room and his placing a package of money in her suitcase established a connection between Charlton and Kyle. We sent the money to Miss Felton at her home this morning. Shortly afterward she called on Kyle in the Pelham Building, was closeted with him in an office he rents there, and undoubtedly turned the money over to him. A few minutes after she departed, Kyle left the Pelham Building, went to the Bolton National and visited the safety deposit vaults. After that he arranged your release from the city jail."

"You seem to know everything, don't you?"

"We know quite a lot. We need a statement from Miss Felton to the effect that she turned this money over to Kyle and I rely upon you to get it."

"Then you are making a mistake," said Frisby shortly. "I will do nothing

which will connect Miss Felton in any way with this matter. Furthermore, I was mistaken in stating that she was representing Kyle in any way when she visited New York. He gave her a letter to the chairman of the national committee. Anything else I told you, I now deny."

"So that's the way you propose to work for us," Morgan snorted.

"MISS FELTON is perfectly innocent and she isn't going to be dragged into this at all. You admit that you have no evidence, nothing that you can use to proceed against Kyle or Charlton."

"Right."

"Well, you are at liberty to use what you suspect in any way which eliminates the girl. I'll tell you this, confidentially. She carried a package to New York. During her absence somebody removed it from her suitcase. Next day, while she was visiting the national secretary, somebody placed another package in the suitcase. She didn't meet Charlton and doesn't know who did the job. Kyle was taking no chances of having her as a witness against him, the crafty swine."

"Still, she should have known it was a questionable transaction."

"So long as she committed no offense and was not aware that she was being used by others for criminal purposes, you have nothing on her and you know it. I doubt very much if she knows that the package she gave Kyle this morning contained ninety thousand dollars."

"I can believe that. And I admit that she committed no crime if she did know that she was turning a fortune over to Kyle. I'm willing to leave Miss Felton out of it. The point is that we know that Charlton paid Kyle

ninety thousand in cash for something. We have the numbers of the bills for record purposes. You can be very useful to us, Frisby. I hope you haven't forgotten your agreement with me in New York."

"No, though I'm hanged if I can see how I can serve the government. I don't even know what dope looks like."

"It's unfortunate that we didn't get the box which Kyle sent to Charlton. It might have contained a list of drug peddlers, or information regarding opium shipments about the country."

"Could it have contained drugs?"

Morgan laughed. "Not ninety thousand dollars' worth."

"Yet he didn't send money to Charlton. He received it from your suspect."

"The ninety thousand dollars might be a month's dividends from a nationwide industry, my boy."

"I get you."

"Good. Now, do you happen to know a speakeasy run by an Armenian named Gulian?"

"My acquaintance with speakeasies is limited."

"This is a high class place on Brook Street. I want you to get a card and make a practice of dining there two or three times a week. Get acquainted with Gulian and look his customers over carefully. You'll hear from me in one way or another in a couple of weeks."

"I don't know that I can afford to patronize an expensive speakeasy."

Morgan drew a bill fold and passed over two one hundred dollar bills.

"Expenses," he said succinctly.

"Very well. Do I look for anything in particular?"

"Gulian's is headquarters for fashionable addicts. No prohibition man can get in there, the police protect the

joint perfectly, and a revenue man would quickly be spotted. By the way, Allen has been notified to keep away from you. I don't think you will be suspected."

"I'll take a chance. I'm not as cowardly as I perhaps seem; I would like very much to get the goods on Kyle if he really is as rotten as you suspect."

"Keep on good terms with him if possible. Be grateful for his services in getting you out of jail this morning. And here is a little gift."

He handed Jack a small automatic pistol, a weapon which was almost invisible when his hand closed upon it.

"Don't use it except in case of dire necessity, and then shoot to kill. Remember the government backs you."

Jack accepted the gift dubiously. "I'm likely to be in danger in this fashionable speakeasy?"

"A man in our service is in danger almost anywhere in this town. Well, you don't think you would like our encyclopedia?"

"I can get along without it, thanks," Jack said with a smile.

"Good morning, Mr. Frisby. You will regret losing this opportunity."

Morgan picked up his brief case and departed. Jack watched him and saw him enter the next yard and walk up to the house and ring the bell.

"He's a thorough cove," he remarked with a chuckle.

CHAPTER XVII.

NIGHT LIFE.

BROOK STREET was a pleasant thoroughfare which had once been the home of well-to-do Bolton people. It was lined with four and five story brick houses, each with a

flight of stone steps ascending to a high front door, and with a basement entrance which had been used in the good old days by servants and tradesmen.

Number 47 Brook Street at present was occupied by Aram Gulian, who served an Italian and French *table d'hôte* to a select coterie of patrons, and offered them vintage wines and excellent whiskies, brandies and cordials.

At the basement entrance, the night following his interview with Morgan, John Frisby presented himself in the company of an exceptionally well-dressed and attractive young woman who was tall, slender and dark and vivacious. She was billed at the Palace Vaudeville Theater as Señorita Carmencita Valdez, and she sang Spanish songs and performed dances in Spanish costume. The novelist was not aware of her existence until that afternoon, and his manner of meeting her was curious.

In his morning mail was a typewritten envelope containing a slip of paper which was unsigned and typewritten:

Present yourself at the stage door of the Palace at three this afternoon and send in your card to Señorita Carmencita Valdez.

It needed no clairvoyant to tell him that the writer of this communication was Morgan, and that there must be a good reason for the assignment. Jack was young enough to get a thrill out of the opportunity of meeting a talented and exotic young woman whose photographs he had seen in the newspapers, and whose act was considered admirable. He was in love with Laura Felton, but Laura had refused to make an engagement with him; besides which, she was practically en-

gaged to Flemming. Furthermore, he was acting in Laura's interests in obeying Morgan's orders, since the chief had tacitly bargained with him—his enlistment in exchange for Laura's immunity.

At exactly three o'clock he handed his card to the stage door man, who carried it within and returned in a moment to jerk his thumb over his shoulder.

"Go on in," he said. "Dressing room one. Say, you're the first guy the Spanish dame has let in since she landed in Bolton. Some drag, you've got, I'll say."

It was the first time that Frisby had ever been back stage, and he walked rather timidly down a narrow corridor, quite empty, until he came to a room numbered one. He tapped hesitatingly upon the door.

"Come in," said an agreeable contralto voice.

He turned the knob and entered. The *señorita* sat before her dressing table, an eyebrow pencil in her right hand, her beautiful countenance thrust close to her mirror while she scrutinized herself with a pair of very large, very black, and very limpid eyes. She turned and gave him the dazzling smile which seemed to be the exclusive possession of the natives of the Iberian peninsula.

"Ah, Señor Frisby," she exclaimed in a delicious accent. "My ver' old frien'. I am delight' you come to see me. I wonder where you have hide yourself."

Without rising she extended to him a right hand which had long slender fingers the nails of which were painted a bright orange.

Rather dazed at such a reception from a lovely creature whom he had never before set eyes upon, he accept-

ed the hand and took the wooden chair toward which she motioned.

"This—this is very kind of you," he stammered.

"And why not?" she said with a musical laugh. "Have I not keep my evenings free awaiting your coming? Never mind. You have come. And you are going to invite me to dinner to-night, sí?"

"Why, it would be a pleasure."

"A dinner for two!" she said enthusiastically. "It will be like old times."

"Yes, indeed."

"And I want you to take me to a ver' nice place. Gulian's."

Frisby laughed, for he saw the light. "If possible," he agreed. "Only, I don't know if we can get in. I have never been there, and I don't know anybody who has the entrée."

"But I—I have it. A frien' has given me a card. I may bring my frien's. So all is arranged, *no es verdad?*"

"In that case, of course."

"And now, *señor*, you must go. I have to finish dressing for my performance. See, I have on only ze dressing gown."

Coquettishly she displayed a bare shoulder which caused Frisby to color violently.

"But you are delicious," she exclaimed with a mischievous laugh. "Such a *muchacho*."

"What is that, if you please?"

"Jus' a boy," she said archly. "You call for me at six thirty at the Bolton Hotel. We shall wear evening clothes, of course. Wait, I shall write for you a pass. You will sit in a box and see my act and tell me that I am wonderful when we meet for dinner."

She scribbled a line on a card and handed it to the embarrassed young man.

"Give it to the box office," she commanded. "*Hasta la vista.*"

HE thanked her and departed, marveling at the ingenuity of the Secret Service chief.

Morgan had informed him that the service had small funds and was few in numbers, but this radiant Spanish dancer and singer was in the pay of the organization, and her remuneration could not be light.

It was the most natural thing in the world that a girl of her celebrity would be placed upon the list of members of Gulian's fashionable speakeasy society. Thus the problem of how he should obtain entrance to the place was solved at once.

Furthermore the presence of a man alone might awaken suspicion even though he was a citizen of Bolton and reasonably well-known, but his presence in the company of a stage dancer would be accepted as most natural and he could make his observations safely and effectively.

Morgan was really a very remarkable man. For the first time Jack realized the formidable character of the organization of which he was an unofficial member.

He took the card around to the box office and was immediately given a seat in a stage box. When Señorita Carmencita Valdez appeared, there was an outburst of applause from a capacity house, and the orchestra struck up a Spanish melody. The curtain rose upon a street scene in Seville down which tripped the young woman who had recently greeted Frisby so enthusiastically.

She might be in the Secret Service, but she was a splendid artist. She began with a peasant song, appropriately costumed and finished with a

languorous and voluptuous dance, a dance which thrilled the audience though her long skirts permitted only tantalizing glimpses of her slender ankles.

She darted off the stage and returned as a vender of flowers. It was a song made popular by Raquel Meller, and Carmencita was no mean imitator of the international favorite. However, she greatly embarrassed Jack Frisby by singing directly at him and finally throwing him a rose. The attention of the audience was attracted to him and he withdrew into the back of the box, much confused and a little angry though he understood perfectly her motive.

After she had concluded thirty minutes of entertainment, Frisby left the theater and walked home. He was a bit elated at the prospect of entertaining the dazzling young Spaniard at dinner and rather uneasy at the thought of what might transpire in Gulian's. Also he thought it rather curious that an organization which could summon a great artist like Carmencita at a few hours' notice was forced to depend upon an arrant amateur like himself for service. If Morgan had not been so frank, friendly, and confidence-inspiring Jack might have suspected him of some ulterior motive.

He was still more bewildered when he called for Señorita Valdez at six thirty, for she persisted, even in the privacy of a taxi, in treating him as an old acquaintance, spoke of meetings in New York, and evaded any reference to the real object of their visit to Gulian's. So excellent was her acting that she almost persuaded him that they were already acquainted. They certainly were on excellent terms when they arrived at the quiet house on the

quiet street which sheltered a speak-easy and dope dive.

The *señorita* had not been there before, she assured Frisby, but when the guardian of the portal set eyes on her he opened the basement door without looking at the card she extended.

Within, there was a steel door equipped with a peephole, but this opened as readily and a small thin sallow man with no hair and a tiny black mustache swooped upon the lady's hand and kissed it enthusiastically.

"It is a great honor to entertain the *señorita* and her friend," declared Mr. Aram Gulian.

"This is Señor Frisby, a great writer and my very dear friend," she declared. "You will please give him, also, a card of admittance, *señor*."

"I certainly will," replied the proprietor. "I'll have you elected a member of the club and give you a card when you go out, Mr. Frisby."

HE led the way into a saloon on the basement floor which contained a dozen tables, half of them occupied, and a long bar behind which two bartenders were mixing drinks for a dozen men and women who stood with foot on rail. Nearly all these people were in evening dress and most of them stared at the Spanish woman.

Carmencita wore a yellow and red shawl over a red gown. Her thick black hair was parted in the middle, covered her ears and was caught in a knob at the back of the neck. Around her lovely neck was a string of what looked like genuine pearls to Jack Frisby. Her lips slightly parted, her great eyes sparkling, her olive skin delicately tinted, she was not only exotic but exquisite.

The customers at Gulian's knew who she was. Most of them had already seen her performance at the Palace. Gulian proceeded to introduce her and her escort and they made room for them at the bar.

"*Señorita*," Gulian said, "I want to introduce to you one of our big men in Bolton. This is Mr. Cranston of the Merchant's Trust Company, *Señorita* Valdez. And Mr. Frisby, a friend of the *señorita*, who is a writer."

Jack had never met the banker, and inspected him with interest. He saw a large man with heavy shoulders and a solid jaw, a pair of sharp blue eyes behind glasses with shell rims, a long thin nose and a mouth whose meanness was not much modified by a small grayish-brown mustache. Cranston was about fifty years old, but looked younger. He was endeavoring to kiss the hand of the Spanish woman with what he imagined to be the gracefulness of a cavalier.

"You are a very great artist," he assured her. "I have never been so delighted with an act as I was with yours. I consider you better than Raquel Meller."

She smiled archly. "You are much of a flatterer, *señor*," she said. "I am unworthy to touch the hem of the garment of the great Raquel."

Cranston tossed a curt nod to Frisby and endeavored to hold the attention of the lady whom Jack was escorting. Jack asked Carmencita what she wished and ordered cocktails. The banker was trying to lead the girl into a discussion of Spain, which gave Frisby a chance to look around.

He knew none of the people present, but they seemed to represent the élite of the business and social world of Bolton. There were elderly women present as well as girls; all were

smartly dressed. If this was a hang-out for dope addicts, it certainly did not resemble what he supposed such a den must be like. He studied covertly the faces of those at the bar and at the tables, but everybody looked healthy though a few seemed the worse for liquor.

The clack of tongues were deafening, belying the expression, "speak-easy." A man who had been introduced to Jack entered into conversation with him.

"It's the best place in town," he declared. "You can depend upon the hooch, and the food is marvelous, better than at any of the hotels. Expensive but we have to pay high for the necessities of life nowadays."

"The crowd looks high class," said Jack. "Is it always like this?"

"Well, yes, at dinner time. I've been in here late, around midnight and it's quite a different gang; some pretty rough-looking customers. However, it's as safe as a church. Gulian knows how to preserve order."

"*Amigo mio*, I starve," exclaimed Carmencita, with a delightful laugh. "I wish to dawdle over my dinner, and I must be at the theater at nine. So let us dine."

Cranston included Frisby in a generous gesture. "Why don't you two young people dine with me?" he asked heartily. "I expected to meet a friend here, but I don't believe he will turn up."

"You are so kin'," exclaimed the girl. "But I have not seen my dear John for a long time and we have much to say to each other—privately. You understand, *señor*, do you not?"

"Oh, certainly," muttered Cranston who favored Frisby with a jaundiced glance. "Another time. I think I will drop in to see your act again to-

night. The man who is applauding loudest will be yours truly."

"*Gracias*," she said demurely.

"And may I present my compliments in person, afterward?" he urged. Cranston was captivated, and he was accustomed to grasp all his opportunities.

"You may try. I am very moody. Often I am unable to see anybody after my performance because I am depressed."

"I might be able to cure your depression," he insinuated.

"*Hasta luego*, then, *señor*," she said gayly. "Come, Señor Frisby. Do we dine here, Señor Gulian?"

"On the floor above, *señorita*. This way, please."

THEY ascended to what had been the drawing room of the old aristocratic residence, a room sixty feet long by twenty-five feet wide, paneled in mahogany with a fine beamed ceiling. Here were twenty tables as attractive as if they were located in a splendid hotel and with as brilliant a clientele. Carmencita created a sensation in this room also. All eyes followed her as she glided to the table for two at the far end of the salon which did not perturb her for all that it bothered Frisby very much.

The girl sank into a comfortable chair with a sigh of content. "This place has atmosphere, don't you think?" she demanded. "Below, it is a sty for the pigs. That big swine who wished to cure my depression! Bah! No doubt he is married and has five children."

"I really don't know about his family. He is one of the richest men in Bolton."

"But not generous, *amigo mio*. I know men. He is mean."

"Probably that's why he is rich."

"There is a man at a table over there who is staring at you," said the girl. "A friend, *¿sí?*"

Jack turned his head and met the eyes of Tom Flemming who nodded slightly and turned to the young woman who sat with him, a small, dark, audacious-looking girl who might be French or Irish. Jack felt the back of his neck grow hot and experienced trepidation. Flemming would tell Laura that he had seen Frisby in the company of a Spanish woman, obviously of the theater. Although he had every right in the world to be in the company of Carmencita or anybody else, he felt suddenly disloyal to Laura.

And then it came to him that Flemming, being practically engaged, had no right to be in a speakeasy with a girl who was pretty and obviously not quite of his own class. It was Flemming who was disloyal, and Frisby's ire rose against him. The lawyer was apparently absorbed in conversation with the strange young woman and not in the least disturbed that he had been discovered in this place by a friend of his fiancée. Well, Jack had sized Tom Flemming up as a hound the first moment he met him. The fellow wasn't good enough for Laura and he wouldn't get her if Jack Frisby could prevent it.

The waiter disturbed his meditations. Carmencita had ordered and the man thrust the menu card under Frisby's nose.

"Bring me the same," he said absently.

Gulian approached. "A bottle of champagne, *señorita*," he suggested. "You may depend upon my champagne."

"No," she said. "For me, a light

red wine only. Champagne makes my head ache."

"The same," commanded Jack. A bottle of champagne would put a crimp in his slender bankroll. He was glad she wanted red wine.

Carmencita laughed merrily. "You 'ave no originality, *señor*," she charged. "'The same!' Suppose I had ordered *escargots*."

"All right with me. I don't know what that is."

She laughed again. "*Escargots*, they are snails, *señor*."

"Ugh! What a fix I would be in. By the way, am I to have the pleasure of your company at dinner here regularly?" He had lowered his voice.

"No, not unless you are very urgent. To-night I come for business. Other nights only if it is a pleasure."

"Well, I hope it will be."

She shook her head. "I think that not. You are a good-looking *muchacho* and I like you at first but you pay no attention to me. I am used to much admiration."

"Well, aren't we supposed to come here together?"

"No. I am asked to arrange to introduce you. I have done that. However, if you are very nice to me, perhaps—*cómo no?* Why not?"

"I'll do my best."

"Just now you are angry about something. Is it about that handsome man at the table over there who bowed to you?"

"Ye-es. *Señorita*, that fellow is engaged to a lovely girl, a friend of mine. He is here with another woman. That makes me mad."

"Poof. She, perhaps, is dining with another man. It-ees life."

"Let's forget it. I certainly was surprised to be told to call on you. You know of course why I am here."

"No. I do not wish to know."

"But haven't you any idea?"

"I do not desire an idea. Behold the *potage* which arrives. Let us dine."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MASH NOTE.

EVIDENTLY she either did not know or was unwilling to admit knowledge of his purpose in this place, and in either event she was not supposed to help him. She had arranged his admittance and set him upon a good footing with Gulian. Anything else was up to him.

The soup was excellent, the chicken perfect and the red wine a trifle sour. The Spanish girl ate heartily and with gusto and Frisby was able to enjoy an exceptional dinner. As he ate, he lost the apprehensions which had darkened his coming to the restaurant. This was an exclusive place and there was no chance whatever of anything occurring here which would require the brandishing of the smart little gun which reposed in the side pocket of his dinner jacket.

Why, the place was a rendezvous of the best people! Cranston, down in the bar, was one of the wealthiest and most high-hat persons in Bolton, while Flemming was a snob of the first water. Most of the women in the dining room looked like ladies. There was no boisterousness. They sipped their wine quietly and talked in low tones. Every now and then a burst of laughter rolled up the stairs from the bar, but it was mellow when it entered the salon. Waiters moved about on rubber soles serving deftly. Not a bad assignment! The most beautiful woman in the room was his guest, and the government was paying the freight.

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Another night he could come to the place alone; hang around the bar and try to learn something which would justify the expense incurred in visiting the establishment.

"Pig," exclaimed the *señorita* angrily.

"I—I beg your pardon," he stammered. "I was thinking—I forgot—"

"It is not you," she said loudly. "But I am much angered. Just now, the *garçon*, he slip into my hand this note. It is from your blond man over there. Read it. I demand it."

She stood up the better to attract attention, leaned across the table and placed beside Frisby's plate a slip of paper. Then she threw a furious glance at Tom Flemming and sat down again. All occupants of the dining room understood the significance of the situation.

Frisby opened the paper and read its contents, turning scarlet as he assimilated its few terse sentences:

Señorita, you are very beautiful and wonderful, but you are dining with a piker. Ditch him after dinner and permit me to take you to supper. I'll show you a real evening!

"Well," cried Carmencita, her black eyes snapping, her cheeks pink with indignation. "I am protected by you, *señor*. I have been insult'. I have turn' the matter over to you."

"This note is not signed," he replied in a low tone.

"It was that man there, with the dark lady, the tall blond man who is now pretending he did not send it."

Flemming, horribly confused, had turned his back to the Spanish woman's table and was affecting to talk very confidentially with his young woman friend. Carmencita's accusing finger was directed toward

the back of his head. There was rude laughter at the far end of the room, but the majority of the guests waited developments in tense silence.

Frisby looked around. He was very angry and when he reached the boiling point he grew suddenly ice cold. He knew how to punish Flemming most severely.

"Since all you good people seem to be very much interested in our affairs," he said blandly, "I am going to ask your advice. I am entertaining a young lady at dinner. A man whom I have met but once in my life and then for only a moment, wrote a note to this lady and had the waiter hand it to her when I was not looking. This is what he said."

He read the note aloud. It was punctuated at the finish by a burst of hysterical laughter from one of the listeners.

Frisby rose, a smile on his face and wrath in his eyes.

"The young lady informs me that this note was written by you, Mr. Flemming," he said sharply.

FLEMMING had to reply. His pupils were like pinpoints through which darted lances of flame.

"The lady is—mistaken," he said in a low tone. There was an ironical groan from somebody, and a woman laughed shrilly.

"I do not make a mistake," retorted Carmencita. "I saw you write it."

Flemming bowed. "I cannot contradict a lady," he said in a tone which called her a liar.

"No," exclaimed the young woman with whom he was dining. "But you can insult me by flirting with another woman in my presence, huh? Take that!"

And she slapped Tom Flemming so

hard upon his right cheek that the marks of her fingers were visible. Grabbing her hand bag from the table, she ran from the room.

Flemming grew so pale that Frisby was sorry for him.

"The gentleman has been chastised," Jack said. "The incident is closed."

He reseated himself, and with a cruel laugh Señorita Valdez sat down. So did the other guests. Flemming beckoned for his check.

"I might have tried to beat him up and got us all mixed up in a brawl which would have ended in our arrest," said Jack. "I thought that this method was more humiliating and—"

"*¡Sí, sí,*" said Carmencita. "And more safe, *señor.*"

He met her sneer with a level gaze. "Just what is your game?" he asked in a low tone.

"Eh—what do you mean?"

"You know why I am here. You precipitated a scene which would have closed the place to me if I had lost my head."

"*Dios,*" she gasped. "I forget. It is that I am ver' proud, *señor.* I do not permit strange men to think they can send waiters with notes to Carmencita Valdez."

Jack studied her, and decided she was sincere. "Well, you vindicated your honor, and Flemming won't send any more notes to strange ladies very soon. Here comes Gulian."

The proprietor was wearing a broad smile and had his hand outstretched.

"I thank you, Mr. Frisby," he said. "You are smart. Some men would make a row in my place and get me into trouble. I don't let ladies get insulted here. That fellow don't come back no more."

A man who had been sitting near by rose and came over.

"Pardon me, madam," he said with a bow to Carmencita. "I want to congratulate you, young fellow. I know Flemming. He's an arrogant young pup who thinks he can get away with anything. You shamed him plenty. It will be all over town to-morrow and serve him right."

"Thank you," said Jack politely. "And you, Mr. Gulian."

"You come here any time," continued the proprietor. "The house is yours. Sign checks if you want to."

Jack shook hands with him again, and Gulian departed.

Carmencita was laughing. "You're ver' welcome now, *señor*," she said. "My anger was not so bad, eh?"

"I guess you are right. I couldn't have established myself so completely in a month. Do you think I am a coward?"

"No," she said, "but *Dios mio*, what discretion! It is time to take me to the theater."

Frisby paid a twelve-dollar check, and they departed, exchanging cordial bows with the patrons who, now that they had time to think it over, were delighted that a battle had not occurred which might have ended in all the customers of Gulian being conducted to a police station.

F RISBY was not instinctively pugnacious, and he had not the urge of strong friendship for Carmencita to send him at Flemming's throat. He did not think a really well-bred woman would have taken the incident as she had. Nevertheless he had been compelled to fight down an impulse to hurl himself upon the sneering brute who had not hesitated to refer to him contemptuously in the mash note.

Common sense had restrained him. He was in love with Laura, and valued his status as counselor and friend; and he knew enough about women to be certain that, in a quarrel with Flemming, Laura would be even more angry with Jack than she would be with his opponent. She might forgive Flemming, but she would discard Jack Frisby. She would believe Tom's story and give Jack no opportunity to present his side of the case. That Flemming probably would have wiped up the floor with him had nothing to do with his refusal to give battle. The possibility of a beating is no deterrent to an angry man.

He rode in silence with Carmencita to the Palace Theater, walked down the alley to the stage door with her, and thanked her for her company. She said good-by kindly enough, but did not hint that another engagement would be agreeable to her. For his part, Jack never wanted to set eyes on her again.

The alley which runs from Clear Street to the stage door of the Palace is about a hundred feet long, ten feet wide, and lined by the blank windowless walls of buildings. It is dimly lighted by a single electric light bulb over the stage door and what little light drifts in from the thoroughfare.

Jack saw a man in evening clothes enter the alley as he turned away from the door, but assumed he was a performer until the fellow was a dozen feet away, when he recognized Tom Flemming.

Jack stiffened and grew tense, stopped short and waited. Flemming bore down on him and set himself in front of him.

"Mr. Frisby," he said menacingly, "hand me that slip of paper."

The writer, who had anticipated an

onslaught by a man furious because of a public humiliation, relaxed a little. He had mechanically folded the mis-sive which Carmencita had handed to him and had placed it in the pocket of his silk waistcoat. Flemming didn't want that particular specimen of his handwriting floating round, it appeared.

If the fellow had approached him in a less truculent manner, Jack would have returned the indiscreet letter, for he had no use for it and considered the incident closed; but Flemming's arrogance provoked him.

"What slip of paper?" he asked. "Do you happen to mean the note which Señorita Valdez accused you of writing?"

"That's it," said Flemming shortly. "Hand it over."

"But it's not your property. You publicly denied writing it."

"I'm not going to argue with you. Give it to me."

"You admit ownership?"

"Yes."

"Which proves that you told a barefaced lie in the restaurant. In short, Mr. Flemming, you are a liar."

He saw the lawyer's right fist close and he stepped back a pace to avoid the blow, but Flemming was not ready to strike yet.

"I couldn't be expected to make a public admission," Flemming replied. "The note is of no use to you. I want it."

"In the letter you referred to me as a piker," said Frisby softly. "You wish to apologize, perhaps, first to me, and then to the lady whom you insulted by sending such a note."

"I'm not going to bandy words with you," warned Flemming.

"Fine. I'm not going to give you the note, Mr. Flemming."

"I know what you want to do with it. Pass it over or I'll take it from you."

"Mr. Flemming," said Frisby softly, "I'd enjoy seeing you try."

JACK FRISBY was not a boxer, but he had grown to manhood in a hard-bitten neighborhood, and had had quite a few fights in his time. Flemming, he was certain, was an excellent boxer; he was fifteen pounds heavier, and an inch taller. They were in a narrow alley with no possible spectators save the stage door man, who would view the fray with interest and would die rather than interfere.

Jack saw Flemming set himself, and he knew what was coming by the slight hunching of his shoulders. He stepped close to the lawyer, his arms hanging by his sides, a disarming move, and then laid his palms gently upon the biceps of Tom Flemming.

"Now, now," he said soothingly, and suddenly grasped firmly the forearm of his antagonist as it was about to shoot out, with his left hand, while he drove his own right with all his force into the pit of the fellow's stomach. Tom emitted his breath with a loud "whoof," doubled up and met a right uppercut which caught him on the point of the jaw.

He went down on the bricks in a sitting posture, astonished but far from out, and he had almost gotten to his feet when a right swing from the man who was standing over him knocked him off his pins and sent him down for several seconds.

Frisby did not tarry, but walked briskly out of the alley into the main street. Looking back, he saw Flemming getting upon his feet.

The fight had taken place in a street, and Jack considered that the rules for

street fighting were in order. He was privileged to put the boots to his enemy when he was prone, but he didn't carry the battle that far.

The "soothing" method of getting inside the guard of a dangerous opponent had been taught to him years ago by a barroom bouncer who lived in the neighborhood, and he had used it because a fight was forced on him in an alley by a man who was bigger and stronger and well trained in the use of his fists.

Flemming had boxed a lot in college gymnasiums where Marquis of Queensbury rules prevailed. He had expected Frisby to put himself in a posture of defense, and he would have used his weight and reach to cut him to ribbons by the best scientific methods. Instead, Jack had disposed of him before he knew that the battle had begun.

Frisby hailed a taxicab and rode home, still tingling with excitement. It had been a great satisfaction to him to plant his fist against the chin of Laura Felton's fiancé. He had been itching to swat the arrogant brute from the moment of their introduction and the revelation of the fellow's worthlessness, at Gulian's, had increased his disgust with him.

Flemming was supposed to be a gentleman; he came of a fine family, and had been given every advantage; but fundamentally he was a rotter. His effort to "pick up" the Spanish woman demonstrated how little he really loved and respected Laura, and he had followed Frisby to the theater and demanded the letter because he assumed that Jack would show it to his fiancée. That was what Flemming probably would have done were the circumstances reversed. The fact that Flemming had had too many drinks did not

ameliorate his conduct. A true gentleman doesn't become a cad when he is in liquor.

Frisby erred slightly in interpreting the motive of Tom Flemming in endeavoring to recover the letter. It had occurred to him that Frisby would show it to Laura, but he considered that all was over between himself and Laura. At their first meeting he had jumped to the conclusion that Jack was a low type, and Flemming, being an attorney, knew that this particular epistle which reflected so severely upon his own character might be used for blackmail by such a person.

He had correctly assumed that Frisby would conduct the Spanish woman to the theater, and had gone there himself immediately and lurked about until he saw the pair arrive.

FLEMMING, who had imbibed too many cocktails with the girl he was escorting, had been inflamed by the strange beauty of Carmencita. He had his type's usual low opinion of women of the theater, and assumed that if she were in the company of Frisby, a young man whom he knew to have no especial means, she would leap at the chance of improving her list of acquaintances. He had taken advantage of a momentary absence of his own girl to scribble Carmencita a note and had given it to the waiter. He had been sick with astonishment when she made a scene about it.

Had Frisby come to his table to demand an explanation, Flemming would have floored him with a blow and explained the matter in his own way. Rows of this sort in speakeasies are of common occurrence and are remembered only a few minutes. But Frisby had overwhelmed him with confusion by reading the contents of the letter

aloud, his dinner guest had slapped his face and run away from him, and he had been forced to slink away.

He was thoroughly ashamed of himself after a few minutes—ashamed of being caught. Never in his life had he been so indiscreet. People would talk about the affair. In the dining room had been several acquaintances. Back up their chatter with the incriminating letter, and he would be done for in Bolton society. At all costs he must get the letter from Frisby, and it would be some satisfaction to smash in the face of the sneering brute. Events had happened otherwise.

He picked himself up, found a cab and drove to his apartment white with impotent rage. In some way he would get even with the fellow who had beaten him unfairly.

Not for a second did it occur to him that a boxer who attacks a man ignorant of the art of self-defense is grossly unfair, and that such an individual is entitled to defend himself by any means whatever. Frisby was no boxer, but he was a very pretty street fighter.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RING STRIKES.

TWO weeks passed so placidly that they have no place in this history. Jack Frisby became a familiar figure in Gulian's. He saw Laura Felton once, and there was a restraint between them due to a sense of guilt on her part that she could no longer discuss her business affairs with Jack, and his own knowledge of the rascality of the man he supposed that she loved. It never occurred to Jack to tell Laura of the affair in Gulian's. He hated Flemming, and would do all

in his power legitimately to prevent his marriage with Laura, but he was not a tale-bearer.

He had no word from his chief, Mr. Morgan. Flemming made no further effort to secure the damning note, and Carmencita Valdez finished her engagement in Bolton and left for New York without his encountering her again.

Frisby dined two or three times a week in Gulian's and hung about in the bar downstairs for an hour before dinner. He encountered Cranston, the banker, on several occasions, and made the acquaintance of other Bolton luminaries, but Dennis Kyle never entered the place, and if it were a dope dépôt the business was conducted so ingeniously as to escape his attention.

Of course Jack could not know what went on in the upper part of the house. There were three floors above the dining room. Upon the third floor Gulian had informed him that there were private dining rooms and above that his own living quarters. Gulian was exceedingly friendly. It seemed that Tom Flemming had awakened the owner's resentment by the contempt with which he treated a man whose income was ten or fifteen times as large as his own, and Gulian considered that Frisby had done him a personal favor by humiliating the lawyer and giving the den keeper an excuse to forbid him the place.

Gulian was a type which Jack found difficult to classify. He was small, volatile, oily and unctuous with ferret eyes and a vicious mouth, but he did not strike the Secret Service man as likely to embark in a trade which would draw down on him the wrath of the government.

As a speakeasy operator he need not fear very serious punishment if he

were arrested and convicted. He would get off with a fine which he could pay out of a few days' profits—at the worst a few months in jail. As a receiver and seller of smuggled opium products he would go to Federal prison for many years, and Jack thought he was too cowardly to run big risks.

If there was a drug as well as a liquor business going on in this house, its location must be above the second floor, and Jack did not know how to get up there or what to look for if he did. He was still mystified at Morgan's notion that he was valuable to the Secret Service.

Two weeks after his first visit to the speakeasy he picked up the morning paper and read that Paul Allen, a member of the United States Narcotic Squad, had been shot to death the night before and his body pulled out of the water by the police. Credentials on his person identified him and connected him with the government service.

Allen, the sharp, clever detective who had called on Frisby the day after the murder of Pat Cassidy, and who was working on the case for the government, had been slain as brutally as his confrère! Jack grew pale and his hand shook as he read the news article. The man had been killed only a couple of hours before his body was found. There were four bullets in his torso.

Score two for the dope ring or Dennis Kyle, or both.

Death waited in Bolton for Federal agents. Jack Frisby was one. How long would he escape?

Allen knew why Cassidy was killed and what peril awaited the man who tried to find his murderer. It had been up to him to work unobtrusively, and as he was unknown in the city there

was no special reason why he should be singled out for death unless his business was discovered.

How had it been discovered? He had revealed his identity to Dennis Kyle. Kyle had ferreted out the mission of Pat Cassidy to Bolton. Both men were dead. Of course, others might have learned the purpose of the presence in the city of the two Federal narcotic agents, but Kyle, in addition to his inside information, was known to be in touch with Charlton, the New York representative of the dope ring.

MORGAN had thought Kyle was the man he wanted, and Jack had a healthy respect for the opinions of the chief of the Secret Service. Jack understood now why the most nearly invisible agency of the government had been placed upon this job. They had to convict a very powerful politician who had a dozen lines into Washington and who could pull wires in every direction, and it couldn't be accomplished by an organization whose activities were recorded in a political bureau in the capital city.

There was the brutality of the wild boar in the jaw of Dennis Kyle and the craft of the weasel in his eyes. Superficially he was genial, but the selfishness of the man was evident to a sufficiently keen observer.

Jack knew that he pounced upon every opportunity to feather his own nest. Politicians of his sort never scrupled to take toll upon vice and crime so why should Kyle hesitate to be engaged in a business so profitable as the drug trade? Firmly entrenched as he was in Bolton, he had only to fear the investigations of a few Federal agents. Some of them he could have called off by his tools in Washington, and others disposed of—otherwise.

So far the "Racket," as practiced in Chicago, had not reared its hideous head in Bolton; probably because Kyle wouldn't tolerate competition. However, there were plenty of gang murders in town, bootleg battles, and instances of underworld vengeance with but very few convictions.

Cassidy had been left unmolested until he began to edge close to the trail of Dennis Kyle and then he was ruthlessly slain. Allen, warned by Frisby, might have gone after Kyle and met the same fate.

How long before the boss would decide that Jack Frisby was too obstreperous? Already his suspicion had been directed toward the novelist. Frisby was a close friend of Cassidy. He had followed Laura, Kyle's agent, to New York. Probably Allen had been shadowed after his call upon Dennis and followed to the house of Frisby. If Gulian's was a dope headquarters, the fact that Jack frequented the place would be reported to Kyle and might be considered by the big criminal as sufficient reason for eliminating him.

Jack's line of reasoning frightened him. He had an impulse to pack a bag and get out of town. Laura was out of the fellow's clutches. The Cassidy hearing had been held and a verdict of "murder by persons unknown" brought in, so he was no longer detained by that affair.

Wasn't it very quixotic of him to intrude himself in an investigation which had already caused the death of two competent detectives? He owed nothing to Morgan; he had even refused to take government pay. He could go and nobody could criticize him—nobody except himself.

That was the trouble. He had undertaken this job and he couldn't

run away under fire. He would have to stick it out. Rather dismally he made himself coffee and toasted bread upon the electric toaster and sat down to a slim bachelor breakfast. He was summoned to the phone before he had finished, picked it up indifferently, and stiffened as he caught the presence of the password in the other party's first sentence.

"Go to the Bolton Hotel and without stopping at the desk, come up to room 412," went on the strange male voice. The connection was immediately cut off.

Fifteen minutes later he knocked upon the door of the hotel room and was told to enter.

Morgan in a dressing gown was sitting behind a breakfast table. With a friendly smile the chief waved to a chair at the table.

"Sit down, Frisby," he invited. "You read the papers this morning."

"Yes. Terrible, isn't it!"

Morgan nodded grimly. "Two good men gone. The Narcotic Squad are all spotted. I'm fairly certain they don't know that we are in the thing. Allen was shadowing Dennis Kyle. Had been on his trail for a couple of weeks. Kyle got on to it and passed the word along. Allen was a good man, fine record. His chief has already asked the aid of the Secret Service, but he was told that we were not available for a while yet."

"Have you any men in Bolton?"

"Yes. Myself and you. That's all that need concern you."

"I was astonished to find that Carmencita Valdez was in the service."

"Oh, we have a number of theatrical people, some of them stars, who help out occasionally. They are the type least likely to awaken suspicion. We don't explain anything to them.

Tell them to do a certain thing, usually a small matter; they go through, get a check, and pass on their way."

"I AM still at a loss to know why you have honored me with membership. I am no earthly use to you. I haven't discovered a thing at Gulian's."

"You're in solid there. That's important. For instance, you are going to give a dinner party there to-night, in a private dining room. Eight people, three of them women. Tell Gulian a friend of yours is the host and you're throwing Gulian the business."

"What is the idea?"

"That's all you need to know. A man will call for you in his car at six thirty. Name of Hosmer. He is the host. He'll introduce the others."

"I'm glad that I'm not the host to eight people," Frisby grinned. "There's only about fifty dollars left of the two century notes you gave me. One must drink to make good at Gulian's. I dump most of the drinks I order, but I have to pay for them."

"On this job," said Morgan, "we have very liberal expense allowances. If we can grab the big operator in this dope traffic we'll reduce it to the piking proportions it used to have. By the way, have you got acquainted with President Cranston of the Merchant's Trust Company at Gulian's?"

"I met him the night I escorted the Spanish girl. He fell for her hard and tried to horn in on our party. I've seen him in the bar two or three times since, but he pointedly ignores me."

"He'll be there to-night. I guess that's all we have to talk about. I'm slipping you two hundred more for expenses. Better give me a receipt for this money and the cash already advanced."

"Looks like a waste of government money," commented Jack as he signed a receipt.

"Well, let the government worry. Do you know the editor of the Bolton Herald?"

"Farrington? I've met him. Rather peculiar person."

"A very bright man but a cocaine addict. He could help us a lot if he chose, but he doesn't want the traffic interfered with. If drug taking were confined to sodden, poverty-stricken wretches, Frisby, there wouldn't be any money in it. There are people in this city and in all others who are prominent in business and society, yet are slaves to dope. Well, be on your way. Big party to-night."

"Good-by, chief. I'll do my best to make it a success."

Morgan chuckled. "And I'll do mine."

CHAPTER XX.

LAURA BECOMES A PRÉSIDENT.

WITH considerable satisfaction Laura Felton contemplated her bank balance and the prospect of a steady income of a hundred dollars a week in a business which even Jack Frisby could not consider questionable. Their normal expenses, even including her mother's bridge losses, were not in excess of sixty or seventy dollars a week, and she thought she could save a little money on her salary.

Her prospects were promising, too. As the secretary of the embryo league of working women voters, she would have a chance to do good work and make a name for herself; and if she were successful in organizing and managing the association she would be right in line for political preferment.

Dennis Kyle, despite the suspicious incident of the package of bank notes, began to assume to her the aspects of a fairy godfather. She decided that the popular impression of him in Bolton was very unfair. He might be a bit unprincipled, but he was a practical man, not a visionary, and was really more influenced in his action by the needs of the masses than for his own enrichment—though she could not deny that he did not overlook that.

Laura's conscience demanded that she magnify the benevolence of the boss.

She reported to work at the big headquarters of the telephone company on the Monday following the interview with Dennis and was admitted at once to the office of the employment manager. His name was Robinson and he was a small, nervous individual with nose glasses, thin sandy hair and a frazzled blond beard.

He invited her to sit down and picked up a letter which appeared to concern her.

"You are a fortunate young woman," he said dryly. "I am instructed by the president of the company to make a place for you in the personnel department, but you are not to be under the orders of the manager of that department and you are not subject to the rules and regulations of the company regarding working hours. You are to mingle with the employees, make observations and make your reports direct to the president. Mr. Riggs, who is in charge of personnel, is rather perturbed at your appointment and you had better be tactful with him. You are given a private office. Your salary is twenty-five dollars a week; not much for a responsible position such as this seems to be. Have you private means?"

"I have a small income."

"I see. Well, come with me. I'll introduce you to Mr. Riggs and he will arrange your quarters."

She followed the disapproving employment manager down a long corridor and into the office of Mr. Riggs who turned out to be an urbane young man with spectacles and a greeter's smile which he turned on her, though his blue eyes were resentful.

"I should like very much to know what are your plans, Miss Felton," he said. "I am naturally interested in everything which appertains to the welfare of our employees."

"You needn't be," she said with a disarming smile. "You won't find my activities clashing with yours in any respect."

"Yet I ought to know what they are," he persisted.

Laura lifted significant eyebrows. "If that were necessary I am sure the company would have informed you, would it not?"

He was squelched. "Of course, of course," he hastened to say. "There is another feature. You do not have to keep office hours. I trust you will not let that become generally known."

"I shall not tell anybody."

"It would have a bad effect," he assured her. "I am giving you room 1114 on this floor. I trust we shall get along well together."

"Oh, I'm sure of it," she said amicably.

ALONE in her little office she sat at an empty desk and marveled at the influence of Dennis Kyle. He had planted her with a great public service corporation against the wishes of her immediate superiors and put her on the payroll in a post which was a sinecure. It was also a blind.

As a telephone employee she was classified as a working girl and there was no longer a mystery regarding her means of livelihood. Being a young woman who was herself laboring for a living, there could be no criticism of her efforts to organize her fellow workers into a political organization to secure better working and living conditions. Evidently the telephone company had no objections to such an organization for Mr. Kyle must have explained to the president why he wished her employed under such peculiar conditions.

It seemed to her that the first necessity was to get acquainted with as many girls in the plant as possible and then invite them to a meeting where the organization could be effected. She was not aware that the country is full of high sounding organizations with practically no membership, with a president and board of directors who are dummies and only a secretary and treasurer to carry on the work of propaganda of one kind or another.

She spent most of the day laying plans and coming to a realization of the size of the job which was before her, but about four in the afternoon she learned that she was to have expert aid.

There entered a rather cheap-looking but alert young woman who appraised her shrewdly, smiled rather contemptuously and handed her a note.

"Please take a seat," said Laura. She opened the note which contained two or three lines:

Introducing Miss Maggie Sweet.
She'll show you the ropes. You do
what she tells you. D. K.

The style of the communication would have identified it without the initials.

"You know the contents?" she asked, rather cast down by her demotion from general to lieutenant.

"Sure," said Miss Sweet, who was energetically chewing gum. She was a woman of about thirty, freckled, tawny-haired, with grayish-green eyes and a hard mouth.

"Dinny decided that he didn't want any society dames mixed up with this. It's a working girls' organization from top to bottom. You're eligible because you work for the phone company and you're going to be the president. I'm the secretary and treasurer. Of course we work together."

"Of course," said Laura, rather dismally. She didn't like this young woman.

"Well, we'll hold our first meeting in the ward room of Ward One on Wednesday night. We'll have a hundred girls there. That's all we need to get going. I'll have stationery printed and we'll rush our program through and get into action right after the meeting. I'm to handle the publicity. We're going to campaign for a million-dollar clubhouse and a pension fund for girls who are incapacitated, and a vacation fund for those who are run down. We'll have a farm somewhere. Leave it to me."

"But with only a hundred members—"

"Don't be silly. As soon as they hear about the million-dollar clubhouse they'll join by thousands. You got to offer 'em something to get 'em."

"But where is the money coming from? Working girls can't pay dues large enough for such a program," Laura pointed out.

"We'll get the money. O' course it will take time. How does the Y. M. C. A. get millions?"

"By asking the public to contribute. Drives, I believe they call it."

"Well, that's us."

"DON'T you think we are rather impudent to suggest such a thing when the organization, at present, consists of only you and I?"

Miss Sweet laughed. "We'll have plenty of members before we launch the drive. You don't have to bother your head—"

"As president of the association, if I happen to be elected to that office—"

"You're elected now. You don't suppose we're going to let them dumb-bells have any say in the management, do you?"

"I don't see how we can prevent it."

"Listen, lady, you don't know much about organization. We'll have the constitution written and all the officers elected by Wednesday night. All the girls have to do is join. They won't ask any questions."

"Well," said Laura, with a sigh, "it seems rather high-handed to me."

"Kid, I've organized unions all over the country, and leagues against this and that, and meetings of protest and what-not. You never get anywhere unless you're a closed corporation. You leave everything to me."

"That is impossible. If I am going to be president of the society I must know everything that's going on. You seem very efficient, Miss Sweet, but you are not to take any step without consulting me."

"Who wants to? Kyle told me to report to you and I'm doing it. He wants this club to be a power in the next election and he wants that million rounded up in jig time."

"I understand," said Laura quietly. "Suppose we get to work on the constitution."

"I've got it already typed in my bag," said the efficient young woman.

"What is your salary to be?"

"I donate my services, of course. The idea of talking about a salary in a benevolent thing like this!" said Miss Sweet indignantly.

"Well, that's very good of you," replied Laura flushing and feeling guilty since she was being well paid for her participation. "I suppose you have private means?"

"You'd be surprised," said the girl significantly.

Laura began to read the constitution which was very legal in its phraseology and very impressive. She got out of it that the organization was composed of young women who worked for their living and who believed that they should make use of their suffrage to secure good living conditions and good government for the city of Bolton. It elected officers and directors annually from among its members, and all officers and directors served without pay.

There were numerous clauses whose meanings were obscure and she wished she could get a lawyer to interpret them. If she were not on bad terms with Tom Flemming, he would be very useful in this emergency.

However, despite her distrust of the young woman whom Kyle had sent to "assist" her, she could discover nothing which was not praiseworthy in the manuscript before her.

"This seems to be all right," she said finally.

"Certainly it's all right. Kyle had it drawn up himself."

"Well," said Laura finally, "what do you suggest I do between now and the meeting?"

"Read a good book," replied Miss Sweet with a grin. "There ain't anything to do."

"Don't you think I should try to find some recruits to bring to the meeting?"

"Not to this meeting. It's the crucial one. And by next meeting they'll come by themselves."

THE organizer departed, taking her documents with her. After she had gone, Laura had a wild impulse to call up Jack Frisby and ask his advice. This smacked too much of sharp political procedure to satisfy her.

It was a Dennis Kyle scheme to collect a million dollars, and she doubted very much whether a working girls' clubhouse would ever rise in Bolton when the money was collected. Yet, from a reading of the constitution, she failed to see how Kyle could get his claws upon the fund. Should she proceed until some actually dishonest act gave her an excuse for withdrawing or should she withdraw now and lose the good income which was promised her?

She would attend the meeting and see what happened and she would watch Miss Sweet like a cat and make sure that the aggressive young woman did nothing which was not legitimate and proper.

On Wednesday night, in the attractive hall which the city had built in Ward One and supplied rent-free for meetings upon application (from the right people), assembled about a hundred young women. Their presence had been suggested by politically active members of their families, fathers or brothers; and these girls were mostly young and giddy employees of laundries, ten cent stores, factories. They were chattering and inattentive to the business of the evening after they had inspected the chairman, Laura Felton, and decided she was pretty and had on

a nice dress. Miss Sweet railroaded everything through as she had predicted. After the meeting there was ice cream and cake, thoughtfully provided by Dennis Kyle, alias the Ward Committee of the Publocratic party.

"Cinch, wasn't it?" observed Miss Sweet. "Those kids don't know what it's all about and don't care. They're members of the association and it didn't cost them anything and they had a feed so they are happy."

"But we need serious intelligent girls with ideas and ambitions," said Laura.

"What for?" asked Miss Sweet.

"Why—why—to make the society strong and useful to the community."

"Oh, we'll attend to that. Want to read the piece for the papers?"

She handed Laura two or three type-written sheets. The president read that she had conceived the Working Women Voters Association, which held its first meeting that night with twelve hundred enthusiastic young women present. She read no farther.

"This is outrageous!" Laura declared. "I refuse to permit it to go out. You know there were no more than a hundred in the hall."

"Good Lord, what of it? You always lie about attendance. Even the baseball teams do it."

"There will be no lying in connection with this society. Change that to 'a large crowd was present.' I insist."

"For the Lord's sake," demanded Miss Sweet, "what did Dennis Kyle put you in charge for? You'll never get anywhere if you do business that way."

"Then I'll fail, but I don't propose to succeed by falsehood."

Miss Sweet thrust her tongue in her cheek and made the correction.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.



"Look in the pack if you like,"
she snapped, "but keep
away from me!"

Gold

*A man, a woman, and gold—those were the disturbing factors that
plunged a camp of Canadian wood-choppers into bloody strife*

By WILLIAM MERRIAM ROUSE

WITH the entrance of the stranger into the cabin there came to the men around the fireplace a sharp warning of evil. Where there had been well-fed contentment at the end of an honest day's work, this sandy, hard-bitten outsider brought a sudden distrust of the unknown.

He spun a girl ahead of him, with a cruel grasp on her wrist, and then staggered toward the fireplace, carrying a pack so heavy that it gave him all he could do. It fell to the worn planks of the floor with a thud that fairly shook the log building.

At first there was not a word from the men by the fire. The choppers waited for Jacques Taureau, the big boss, to speak; and so did Johnny Brock, in camp for a few days to measure and inspect the pulp wood that had been cut. In the bush a stranger has the right to ask for food and shelter. That this man had a woman with him gave him double claim upon the hospitality of the choppers.

Taureau rose and kicked a bench forward. He was a tall man, big boned, with a black mustache of proportions. Upon most occasions he spoke with a voice of honey. Now he

gave a doubtful smile to the woman, who had hidden her face and was crying; and addressed himself to the man:

"Sit down, *monsieur*—you and your woman. Do you want to eat? There is soup hot in the kettle."

"Don't none of youse talk United States?" asked the stranger in a slightly hoarse, very flat voice. "Me, I don't parley much French."

He took off his cap, and revealed a face with sunken cheeks, very bright dark eyes, and a tight-drawn skin. His reddish hair was scanty; and but for his swift, strong movements he would have seemed a sick man.

"I'm an American," said Brock. "Tom Gurney over there is English, and most of the rest can speak some."

"Me, I speak *l'Anglais*!" announced Taureau, twirling his mustache. "I speak quite some. And *madame*, also she is Yankee?"

"French," answered the stranger, shortly. He sat down, indifferent to the woman, and rubbed his arms as though they were lame from handling that heavy pack. "Say, any place I can put up a horse and sleigh here? Stay all night?"

"With pleasure," answered Taureau. "Ovide! *Vite!* Quickly!"

He spoke to old Ovide Dion, cook and dishwasher and chore boy since years and rheumatism and a very badly injured leg had taken him away from the ax. Ovide got up, with a groan. His infinitely wrinkled face was turned toward the sandy-haired man.

"The devil has turned his *calèche* into a *traineau*!" Ovide muttered, in the patois.

"*C'est ça!*" came in swift agreement from the girl. She also was of the opinion that the devil had changed the traditional carriage for a sleigh. The end of a knitted scarf fell away from

her face and revealed the fair hair and blue eyes of a type sometimes seen in Quebec, always combined with rare charm. But for a certain gleam of dagger points in her eyes it would have seemed that an angel had arrived with the devil at the *chantier* Taureau.

THE boss smiled. He had heard many opinions from women, as to their men.

"Your wife, *monsieur*—?" he asked.

"Call me Red Cat," said the stranger. He had swept the faces in the room searchingly, and it appeared that he was beginning to feel at home. "I ain't married."

"Ah!" murmured Taureau.

"Say!" Red Cat addressed himself to Brock, perhaps as a fellow countryman. "Could a guy lay up here a few days, maybe a week?"

It was no place for a woman. That was the first thought that came into the mind of Johnny Brock, as he met the shiny, inscrutable gaze of Red Cat. There was the rude kitchen at one end of the cabin where Ovide slept by his stove; the bunk room at the other end; and the common space between.

"Ask the boss," Brock replied. "I'm only here for a week, to inspect wood."

"It is possible," said Taureau. Very carefully he curled the ends of his mustache. "You travel in the bush for a purpose, *monsieur*?"

"They's a clink in that pack of his!" laughed Tom Gurney. The choppers felt at ease, familiar. Johnny Brock they respected; this stranger they did not.

"A pretty girl and money!" exclaimed Gaston Bisette in his own tongue. He was a gross fellow of great strength. "*Bon Dieu!* What more can a man ask of this world?"

The face of Red Cat took on a hunted look. His glance stabbed at the girl and came back to Jacques Taureau. The strange language of the woodsmen confused him.

"I got a reason for traveling. I aim to stay in the woods a few days before I go on, and I'll pay well."

At this moment Ovide Dion came in, stamping the snow from his feet. He sniffed and shivered over the fire, but between the girl and him a look of understanding seemed to pass.

"*Madame, or mademoiselle,*" said Taureau, speaking slowly, "will take the bunk of the cook, Ovide. It can be curtained. You, M. Red Cat, may sleep here on the floor by the fire. As for the old man, it does not matter. He can hang himself on a nail if he likes."

"*Sacqué chien!*" Ovide swore with an oath half a century out of fashion. "I shall give the lady my bunk, of course, but I shall not hang on a nail, me!"

A roar of laughter from the choppers greeted the indignation of Dion. Under cover of that laughter one François Charet, a thick-chested man with a devil-may-care swing in his shoulders, rose and went to the water pail for a drink. On the way back to the fire he managed to trip over the pack of Red Cat; and Brock, watching him, knew that it was done deliberately. A dull clink came unmistakably to curious ears. The stranger's hand jerked toward a coat pocket.

"*Sacré!*" exclaimed Charet. "I have broken a toe on the horseshoes in that pack!"

There was an undercurrent in the laughter this time. Every man in the room felt that here was money, a mystery, and a beautiful girl. Brock wondered. This Red Cat was either stupid

or hard-pressed if he intended to stay at the *chantier* Taureau.

HIS next move convinced Johnny Brock that he was not stupid.

He rose suddenly and went out of the cabin with the excuse that he wanted to make sure his horse was well taken care of. Old Dion limped as far as the door and pointed out the stable.

Brock was sure that he alone saw the door open a tiny crack, a moment after it had slammed ostentatiously. He fancied that he caught the glistening of an eye in the little slit of outer darkness.

Every other man in the room was intent upon Jacques Taureau. He was the boss, and it was his lead that would be followed, at least for the present. Even the girl dropped her scarf and watched him, with parted lips. He favored her with a smile.

"*Chérie,*" he said, rising, "you have no great love for M. Red Cat. Or so I understood when you agreed with Ovide, there, that he was the devil."

"It is true," she replied coldly.

"*Eh bien!*" exclaimed Taureau delightedly. "You permit me to glance into his pack out of curiosity? That and nothing more, my little one?"

Taureau stepped close to her. Perhaps he intended to kiss her hand, as he leaned over. There was a movement, and the boss staggered back with a hand to his cheek. Three long scratches, red and gleaming, were revealed in the candlelight.

"The devil and the devil's wife!" he gasped. Only Brock dared to chuckle openly.

"It's gold that's in the pack, *animal!*" snapped the girl. "Look if you like. But keep away from me!"

"Gold!" breathed Bisette hoarsely.

A stride took Taureau to the canvas pack and the clumsy blanket roll of the stranger. He knelt, and his fingers made quick work of the straps. Brock saw him take out a heavy sack; saw the cords at the neck of it yield and reveal the shine of yellow metal. Then the boss and the violated pack were blotted out by crowding forms.

"Back!" roared Taureau. "You fools! Do you want him to see us and think we are thieves?"

The men scattered; moved slowly back to their places. Taureau replaced the pack with lightning movements and turned to the girl as he sat down again.

"*Mademoiselle*, we wood-cutters are curious, but we are honest men."

The door swung open and Red Cat stepped in. He spoke no word as he crossed to his bench.

Suddenly the girl began to laugh. She rocked back and forth, a little hysterically, and the music of her laughter filled that smoky, ill-smelling room.

"I wish I'd never seen youse!" snarled Red Cat bitterly. "Get out of here and go to bed!"

"Johnny," said Taureau, smoothly, "you and I will sleep here with M. Red Cat. Thus we can keep him and *mademoiselle* from attacking each other, and assure rest to both of them."

"It is agreeable to me," said Brock.

"Sleep with one eye open!" muttered Ovide, who was rubbing salve on his injured leg. "A woman is trouble enough. Money is too much!"

"Dried-up crow," remarked the boss, silkily, "you yourself will sleep in the grave before long, I hope."

THERE was a stir about the fire. Men who eat before daybreak and begin work with the ax and cross-cut saw at the first gray of dawn sleep early. They yawned and scratched, and

one by one went into the bunk room. Each of them, after his own nature, glanced at the pack as he passed it; Charet with a boldly defiant stare, Gurney with an affectation of indifference, Bissette slyly, breathing hard. The heavy *bottes sauvages* thumped on the floor in a growl of conversation.

Johnny Brock was uncomfortable. The gold was none of his business, but in the matter of the girl he felt concerned. In most camps she would have been safe but uncomfortable. The average *bûcheron* has all the natural courtesy of the French. But the wood-cutters whom Taureau had collected were none too choice a company and the girl had not even the protection of the man who had brought her there.

Brock desired peace, both for his own sake and that of his work, but he was a lull-throated, hard-fisted young man and he feared nothing on two feet or four. He approached the girl.

"*Mademoiselle*," he said, "if I can be of service to you—"

"You can be of service to me by attending to your own affairs," she interrupted, raising limpid blue eyes to his. "Otherwise, *monsieur*, I hope you will die soon. I have a knife."

Taureau put back his head and roared. The crack in the face of Red Cat expanded to a grin. Ovide Dion was more delighted than he would have been with a hundredweight of tobacco. He giggled until he forgot his leg and slapped it with a gnarled hand.

"I have got just what I deserved," admitted Brock, laughing.

The boss went chuckling to find his blankets. It was Ovide who brought a stump of candle for the girl; who did what he could to make the bunk comfortable. Then he curled up in a corner by the fire in the big room. Taureau, Red Cat, and Brock stretched out

at good distances from each other, like unfriendly dogs. The stranger used his pack for a pillow.

The candles were out. The fire died down. For a long time Brock lay staring at the embers and listening to the chorus of sounds that rose in the three rooms. Ovide perpetrated a regular but subdued whistling. Taureau breathed deeply. Now and then the Red Cat muttered the fragment of a sentence. From the bunk room came an assortment of snores.

Johnny Brock was drifting off to sleep when an especially loud, gurgling sound pulled him back for an instant. A plank in the floor creaked and he felt a breath of cold air. Some one had turned over, he thought, and a gust had swept down the chimney.

He awoke to see Ovide putting pitch pine on the coals in the fireplace. The windows of the cabin were blocked out by the first hint of daylight. Johnny Brock rolled out of his blankets and stretched. He saw that the eyes of Jacques Taureau were open and fixed upon him.

"Hello!" said Brock, cheerfully. The boss grunted.

"Ovide!" he growled. "Go and wake up the Red Cat. Then hurry the breakfast."

DION padded across the room. He leaned over to grasp the shoulder of the Red Cat. Then his bent back straightened and he turned a putty-colored face to the boss.

"*Nom du ciel!*" he croaked, and made the sign of the cross.

"What's the matter, *imbécile?*" cried Taureau, springing up. "Talk, can't you?"

"He's dead!" gasped the old man. "Murdered!"

Brock and Taureau were across the

room together. They found the Red Cat on his back, with the blankets pulled down a little from his chest. The wooden haft of a knife stuck up from a soiled and crumpled silk shirt.

There was silence while the boss and Johnny Brock looked at each other. Taureau's eyes shifted to Ovide, who was chattering a prayer. At the sound of a light step the three of them turned away from the dead man. The girl was standing in the doorway of the cook room.

"Some water for washing," she said coldly.

"But he is dead!" cried Ovide, pointing. "The man you came with has been murdered!"

"Is that any reason why I should not wash my face?" she asked.

"What a woman!" muttered Taureau. Brock, looking at her golden-haired beauty, wondered what manner of creature was wearing that angel's mask. Ovide, still praying, trotted to do her bidding.

Suddenly Charet appeared in the doorway of the bunk room. Gurney and Bisette and the others were close behind him. They came crowding out, whispering uneasily.

"Where's the gold?" asked Bisette.

Taureau bent gingerly, and drew back. He turned to Brock.

"You're an outsider," he said.

"Look and see if it's there."

Johnny Brock pulled forth the pack, gently, but it was needless to open that shrunken shape. It was empty now.

"Somebody in this cabin knows where it is!" cried Taureau.

"I wish I did," Charet told him with insolence.

"Who owns the knife?" asked Gurney.

For a moment no one answered. Then Ovide returned to the group.

"It is from my kitchen," he said.

"Then where's the gold?" Bissette laughed with a strange, raucous sound.

"Shut up!" snapped the boss. "A dead man is no joke."

"Ovide didn't do it," offered one man. "He couldn't carry the sack!"

"Anybody might have done it," said Taureau nervously.

"Even the girl?" asked Charet.

"No—don't be a fool. That was a heavy blow."

"She struck a good one last night!" exclaimed Gurney.

The temper of the room was getting strained, and Brock was glad when Taureau bawled at Dion:

"Get breakfast! We've got to work—just the same."

"I can do with breakfast, but not with work to-day," declared Charet. "There's a fortune in gold here somewhere. I can use it, or a reward, as well as the next man."

THERE were grunts and mutterings of approval. Taureau's eye swept over his men. A light laugh floated from the cook room.

"You'll never find it," said the girl.

"Then you've got it!" wheezed Bissette. He took a step forward. "You can be made to find it, my little one."

Brock moved over to the cook room, and Taureau drew his knife.

"The first man that starts a fight will feel this in his ribs," said the boss. "I can't keep you from looking for the gold. You're too many for me. But no fighting. And leave the girl alone!"

"So you can get the money for yourself?" asked Gurney.

"He can't keep it if he does," shrugged Charet.

"Breakfast!" cackled Ovide.

At a sign from Taureau two of the

bûcherons carried Red Cat out of the room, into the sleeping quarters, and covered him with a blanket.

Clatter of knives and the sound of long inhalations of tea stopped the quarreling. Ovide and the girl ate in the kitchen. When that hurried meal was over, Taureau rapped on the table.

"If one of you finds this gold," he said, "he'll have to deal with the police sooner or later."

"We're a long way from the police," laughed Charet. "Winner take all!"

"No!" cried Gurney, with determination. "Half to the man that finds it and share alike for the rest. Red Cat had it all—and now he's dead!"

"And hunt in pairs," eagerly added Bissette.

"I'd like to see anybody take it away from me," sneered Charet, but he made no further objection.

They were milling away from the table when Ovide, hidden behind a pile of plates, got in the way of Bissette. There was a kick, and the old man lay groaning on the floor. Brock stepped forward with his hand on his knife, but there was no second blow. He lifted Ovide in his arms and carried him into the cook room, with a leg dangling crookedly. The girl sprang up and began to arrange the blankets in the bunk.

"I trust Gaston Bissette will be the next to leave this world," said Brock.

"An excellent thought!" For the first time she looked at him with interest in her eyes. "My name is Fanchon Lapointe, *monsieur*. You may leave Ovide to my care."

Brock went back to the main room and found it nearly emptied, most of the men having elected to begin their search out of doors. Two or three, however, were tearing up planks from the floor, probing the thatch of the

roof, tapping the mortar of the fireplace.

Johnny Brock smiled and left them. For the first time he remembered the strange sound he had heard on the night before, and the gust of cold air. For an hour he watched the others and pretended to search. The men in the cabin gave it up at last and came out. Every trail in the bush was followed, every stick in the long ranks of wood was thrown down. The stable was ransacked.

Brock did not want to find the gold, but at last the contagion of interest infected him. He tried to put himself in the place of the person who had stabbed Red Cat. There had been time for a reasonably good concealment of that heavy sack. What then? Given boldness and intelligence of a sort, the murderer would either put the gold in a place so obvious that no one would think of it, or in a place so unusual that it would not be found except by accident.

Johnny Brock was standing in front of the cabin when an idea came to him. He looked around. The search had spread out into the woods and there was no one in sight. For a short time thereafter he was exceedingly busy.

ANOTHER hour had passed when a faint shout of triumph came from the bush. There were cries here and there, like the answering calls of the wolf pack, and then the broken voice of a man mortally stricken. A few minutes later a little knot of men came carrying a burden that sagged in their arms. Brock met them and looked into the glazing eyes of Tom Gurney.

"Gurney and Bisette worked together," explained Taureau. He wiped a wet forehead, although it was all of twenty below zero that day. "Bisette

thought Gurney had found it. He stabbed him!"

"Two—so far," said Brock, in a low voice. "And you'll have another dead in a day or two if you don't send Ovide out of the bush. His leg was bad enough. Now it's broken and he's running a fever."

"He's useless!" snorted Taureau. "Let him go."

"He could take the horse and sleigh of Red Cat," suggested Brock. Taureau's eyes narrowed.

"If he can drive. You and the girl stay here, Brock. Some think she stuck the man, or helped."

"I didn't intend to go. *Mademoiselle* could have got out in the night; but she's still here."

"You and she are too calm about a bag of gold," offered Charet, who had come up and joined Taureau.

"However that may be, I'm going to see Ovide off," answered Johnny Brock coldly, and he turned away.

Half an hour later Ovide Dion was braced-up on the driver's seat of the sleigh that had brought Red Cat and the girl. The old man's injured leg was laid along a cushion of blankets, and although he was burning with fever, he could hold the reins. A few hours would take him out of the bush and to the house of some *habitant* who could get a doctor. Charet and half a dozen others saw to it that Dion went alone.

It was now well past noon and the men drifted into the cabin for something to eat, surly at the failure of their search and irritated at the lack of a hot meal. Fanchon Lapointe and Brock sat in a corner where the long table joined the front wall of the cabin and watched the choppers plunder the kitchen.

"How long will they hold off?" she asked in a low voice.

He knew what she meant. They were two victims ready at hand for the little band of men which was rapidly turning into a wolf pack. Even if the men found the gold, Fanchon had little chance of escape; none at all while Taureau lived. What restraint had been in the camp was nearly gone.

"Until they decide to make us tell where the gold is," he shrugged.

"That would save you, *monsieur*!" The eyes which could be as clear as the waters of a mountain lake, or burn with wrath, looked into his.

"Do I want to be saved, Mlle. Fanchon?"

BEFORE she could reply a silence which spread through the room took their attention. Johnny Brock turned his head and knew that the hour of trial was at hand. The men were in a corner, whispering, and there was only one direction which their glances took.

Brock was thankful that there were no weapons other than axes and knives in the camp. He watched Taureau swagger away from the group, hitch up his belt, cross the room. He stopped and looked down at Brock.

"You two will have a chance to talk in a minute, as soon as the fire burns up!"

"Taureau," said Johnny, "the gold is still where the murderer hid it last night. Neither *mademoiselle* nor I had anything to do with that."

"You can't lie out of it!" cried Charet truculently. He and Bisette had followed the one-time boss, with the others trailing behind them.

"*Messieurs*!" cried Fanchon, her eyes swimming in tears. "You do not mean that you would hurt me?"

"Only a little toasting of the feet!" laughed Charet.

Johnny Brock was rising with a blow that would have driven into the face of the man looming over him, when the voice of Fanchon rang through the room.

"Pigs!" she cried. "Get back to your pen!"

Brock saw blue lightnings in her eyes; saw the black muzzle of a pistol leveled steadily at the stomach of François Charet.

Even Charet obeyed, although slowly. The others broke and scuttled to the corner from which they had come. Johnny Brock snatched the pistol from the hand of Fanchon.

"Only two cartridges!" she whispered. "I took it from Red Cat today while you were seeking the gold."

The courage of Charet was of no mean quality. As the weapon changed hands he started to rush in. Brock fired. Charet gripped his arm, staggered, and curdled the air with a burst of profanity. For the moment he had trouble enough; he retreated to the corner with the others.

"Come on!" said Brock to Fanchon, as he made for the cook room. "Get out of the window. I'll hold them at the doorway."

Fanchon went into the kitchen readily enough, and Brock, watching the clustering enemy, thought she had obeyed until he heard a defiant little silver-toned laugh at his elbow.

"*Imbécile!* Do you think I am a deserter? You know I have a knife. I can use it!"

Brock's hasty plan had aimed only at escape for the girl. Since she would not go without him, he must go with her. But the window was too small for his shoulders. There was a slender chance that he could gain the outside door and make a running fight in the open. He drew his knife.

"We're going to try for the door," he said to her in a low voice. "Keep behind me!"

"The man is beginning to show some sense," murmured Fanchon.

By then Charet had definitely taken the place of Taureau as leader. He was spreading his men—out of respect for the pistol—for a rush, when Brock surprised him.

JOHNNY and Fanchon were halfway to the door before Charet and his following closed in. Brock fired his last shot. Charet sprawled headlong, and when he tried to rise, a leg doubled under him. But Taureau took the lead again and flung himself between Brock and the doorway. Their knife blades met with a whimper of steel.

The six feet yet to go might as well have been so many miles. Brock fought with Fanchon crouching beside him and the wall at his back. The men were trying to come up on each side; two of the *bûcherons* had dropped to hands and knees, with knives in their teeth. They would take his legs out from under him if they could. He had seen such tactics in other fights.

It seemed like the end. There was comfort in the thought of Fanchon's knife, and her cool and desperate courage. Taureau pressed hard. He had strength and skill, and in the heat of battle developed courage. Parry and thrust, and parry again. Only Brock's tempered muscles saved him.

He lunged, almost in despair, risking everything. Taureau had not expected that, and the point went past his guard. With a yell the big man dropped his knife and staggered back. A touch of the steel and his fighting spirit was gone.

Brock recovered himself as the men

on the floor made ready to spring. Gaston Bisette lumbered forward to take the place of Taureau. Brock kicked the nearer of the men on the floor and turned to meet an enemy at his right.

Johnny found himself fighting body to body with a thick-set chopper. They whirled around in time for him to see Bisette stumble in front of the man who was springing from the floor. Gaston Bisette spitted himself on the knife intended for Brock.

A yell cut the medley of shuffling feet and panting breath. Fanchon reeled into Brock's line of vision and that sight gave him the strength of a dozen men. He drove a knee into the stomach of his man and was free.

Now Fanchon was holding the door open. He saw forms rushing at her and at him. He thrust, and his blade met something solid. Then he was out under the sky, with the girl gasping beside him.

"I bit a man!" she panted. "He was going to stick you in the back!"

Johnny Brock turned to face the doorway. From within came the voice of Charet, bullying, giving orders. Whipped by his indomitable will they came streaming out. Brock gave ground and yearned for a good wall at his back.

Then there was a cry of joy from Fanchon; the *bûcherons* huddled toward the cabin. Brock dared to look over his shoulder. Two sleigh loads of men had driven up, nearly all of them in the uniform of the police.

"*Grâce à Dieu!*" Fanchon caught at his arm. "Ovide sent my message!"

An important-looking man came up to them; and removed his high *casque* of Persian lamb. Johnny Brock was prepared to believe that here was at least the premier of a province.

"I see there has been trouble here, Mlle. Lapointe," the official said. "But first let me tell you that your brother Charles is alive, despite the blow of the man who robbed our branch of La Banque Nationale at St. Joachim and abducted you—"

"But, *monsieur*!" Her head was up, her eyes flashing through tears. "Permit me to say that I abducted the robber! I thought Charles was dead after that scoundrel who called himself the Red Cat had struck him. I was furious—frantic! He had tied me up. I pulled the knots with my teeth. I ran out and jumped into his sleigh as he was driving off with the gold."

"You understand, *monsieur*, that my brother, the manager, and I had been working late on the books, but there were still lights in the village. I screamed. The robber tried to throw me out, but I clung to the reins. I had followed, and we fought until we were beyond reach of help."

"*Bon Dieu!* What a night! The Red Cat did not dare to leave me for fear I would tell he had hidden in the bush. He did not kill me, perhaps because he thought I might serve as a hostage. He came to this *chantier* and found men as bad as himself. *Dieu Seigneur!* They killed and robbed him in the night, one of them. Then they began to kill each other, trying to find the gold. And just now they set upon M. Brock here, and me."

WHILE the officials of La Banque Nationale and Johnny Brock listened the constables had herded the *bûcherons* into the cabin. Now a sergeant came out.

"M. Duchesne," he said, "we've placed everybody under arrest. And found a dead bank robber who's wanted in New York and Montreal."

"Bring the prisoners out," ordered M. Duchesne.

They came out handcuffed, with Taureau in the lead, and the constables lined them up.

"Now, where's the gold?" asked the official.

"I can tell you that!" exclaimed Brock. "Chop up that hard-packed snow in front of the doorway."

Two constables sprang to the task, and in less than a minute the sack was at the feet of M. Duchesne. The prisoners muttered and swore. Only Taureau was silent, staring.

"How did it get there?" asked the sergeant.

"I don't know," Johnny admitted. "While the hunt was on to-day I wondered what a man in a hurry would do with a thing like that. He might put it in a place so obvious nobody would look, I thought, if he had intelligence. Then I was standing out here and I saw about an inch of one of those cords that draw the sack closed. It was sticking out of the snow, where it had been buried and the snow re-packed over it. I covered up the string again."

"But who killed Red Cat?" persisted the sergeant. "He's the man that hid the gold."

"This man who found the gold hid it in the first place—and killed Red Cat!" shouted Taureau. "*Sacré!* That's why I've let my men fight him. If the girl got in the way it was her own fault. Last night I saw Brock get up and bend over the stranger. Then he went out, and the floor creaked under him. There was no light but the fire, so I couldn't see what happened, but this morning we found the stranger dead."

Johnny Brock was too stunned to speak as he stared at the triumphant

face of Taureau. It was clear that M. Duchesne and the sergeant were puzzled. But Fanchon Lapointe laughed.

"It is a good story," she said, "but it does not agree with mine! I was awake all night in the room next to them, and I spent most of it watching Red Cat to see that he did not slip away from me. I also saw a man get up and bend over him, and go out, and come back in! But it was not M. Brock. For he lay quietly all night close to the fireplace, and the light of the embers was on his face!"

"Then who was it, *mademoiselle*?" asked M. Duchesne.

"There was but one other able-

bodied man in the room," she said. "Taureau!"

A constable seized the arms of Taureau from behind, just as he leaped toward Fanchon. They hurried him away, struggling and cursing all women.

"That old wreck Ovide was right!" he snarled, as he was loaded into a sleigh. "Women are trouble itself!"

Johnny Brock caught a faint smile from M. Duchesne. He looked into the eyes of Fanchon. Now they were bluer than the bluest of lakes, under the brightest skies.

"I like trouble," he said, in a voice that was for her alone.

THE END.



Echoes of Pre-Volstead Days

THOUGHTS of the Eighteenth Amendment never entered the minds of the early settlers in California if one is to judge by the names given many communities in the roaring days of '49. The prominence of the cup that cheers was shown in such names as Dead Man's Bar, Dirty Bar, Brandy Flat, Brandy Gulch, Port Wine, and Whisky Bar. In fact, the unpleasant results which sometimes followed overindulgence were immortalized in the town of Delirium Tremens. One wonders whether it was intentional irony that changed the name of Whisky Hill, which before prohibition had a saloon on each corner of its single street, to Freedom, the name this village now bears.

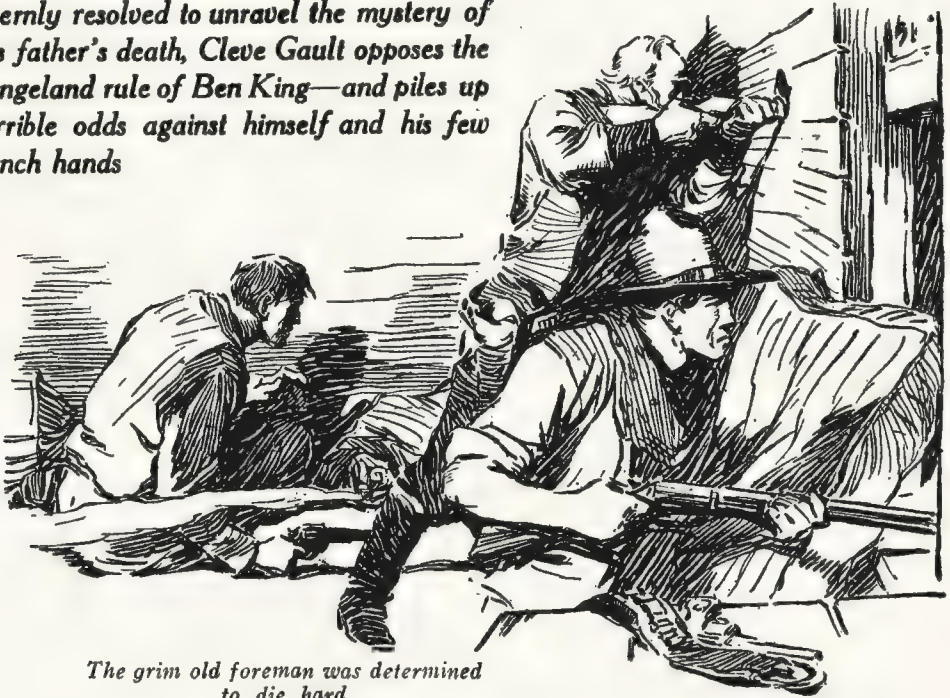
The influence of religion was responsible for such names as Piety Hill, Gospel Swamp, Mount Zion, and Paradise. At the other extreme were Hell's Delight, Hell-out-for-Noon City and You Be Dam. Feminine memories were recalled to the lonely miners by such towns as Love Letter Camp, Bloomer Hill, Petticoat Slide and Ladies' Cañon. Gambling, the main recreation, evidently had something to do with the naming of You Bet, Seven-Up Ravine, Poker Flat, Seventy-Six, and Poverty Flat. Shirt Tail Cañon might seem to indicate a strip poker game.

The places bearing these colorful names which suggest so much of the rough life of the gold rush days are mostly ghost towns now. Rough and Ready, and Timbuctoo, both famous in their time, now have a population of one family each. There are some notable exceptions, such as Yerba Buena, now the city of San Francisco; Sutter's Fort, now Sacramento, the State capital; and Hangtown, now the flourishing small city of Placerville.

Kathryn Palmiter.

In the Reign of King Ben

Sternly resolved to unravel the mystery of his father's death, Cleve Gault opposes the rangeland rule of Ben King—and piles up terrible odds against himself and his few ranch hands



The grim old foreman was determined to die hard

By J. E. GRINSTEAD

Author of "Square Conchas," "War above the Timber Line," etc.

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

WHILE playing cards in Gus Kottner's saloon at Fort McKinnon, Texas, Trav Bolan and Jim Gault, lifelong friends, were shot and killed, apparently by each other. Bolan was owner of the Box B ranch and Gault had the J G Bar.

Three army officers and Ben King—commonly called King Ben, wealthy owner of the Lazy K ranch and boss of the county—had been playing with the two men just before the shooting, and Dave Lane, one of King's punchers, had been standing near by, but no one seemed to know what had led to the shooting.

Cleve Gault, son of one of the victims, had come into the saloon just before the shots were fired, but a haze of tobacco smoke had prevented him from witnessing the details. Immediately afterward, King showed young Gault his six-chambered revolver, with all chambers filled, as evidence that he had not participated in the killing.

Each of the slain ranchmen left a widow and a son. Bolan's son was named Earl. Bolan had a daughter, too—Ethel, who was very fond of Cleve and who, was courted by King with her mother's encouragement, but not her own.

This story began in the Argosy for April 19.

The day after the shooting, the U. S. Army detachment vacated Fort McKinnon, whereupon King undertook to preserve order in that locality. When the hot-headed Earl drew his gun on Cleve at the double funeral, with the idea of avenging his father, King intervened and avoided bloodshed which would involve the women.

That was the beginning of the Gault-Bolan feud, in which several men were killed and Earl was wounded. King's repeated intervention antagonized Cleve, so that King finally sided against him and, at Mrs. Bolan's request, took over the management of the Box B ranch in addition to his own.

Across the road from Kottner's saloon was Red Herrick's undertaking shop, where King recognized a body in an open coffin as Roby Daniels, a Texas Ranger. Dave Lane admitted to King that he had killed the man in self-protection, Dave having fled from a murder charge years before. Using this confession as a whip hand over him, King sent the fellow on a dangerous mission, to order the Lazy K riders to raid the Gault ranch and kill all hands.

Lane was captured by Cleve and "Old Gregg" Norton, his foreman, and was forced to disclose details of King's conspiracy. Shortly afterward King shot him. But before he died, Lane gave Ethel an important message for Cleve.

CHAPTER X.

WITH TORCH AND GUN.

CLEVE GAULT and Old Gregg Norton were sitting on their horses within a hundred yards of the trail when King and five of his men

thundered by on their way home to the Lazy K.

They could have got a man or two of them, but Cleve was above ambushing an enemy unless necessity should drive him to it. He didn't want to kill King Ben.

What he wanted was to get the King where he had had Dave Lane.

He was still positive in his mind that King knew more than he had told about the killing of Jim Gault and Trav Bolan, but it would be hard to get to King Ben now.

Cleve's reason for wanting more definite knowledge about that mysterious killing was a selfish one. Ever since Ethel had come to the J G Bar at night, and apparently led him into a trap, Cleve had cursed her in his heart, but now it was different.

Dave Lane's confession had made it plain that it had been King's own men who had tried to steal Cleve's horses, and who also had attacked his house and tried to kill him. His old love for Ethel had come back, and he felt better for it, but there was still a wide gulf between them and would always be, unless the mystery about the killing of their fathers could be cleared up.

There was no doubt in Cleve's mind what would happen now. It was war. He still had fifteen men able to ride and shoot, and they were all loyal, but the King had more than forty, in spite of the ones that had been killed and wounded, and he also had the Box B riders. The King would strike quick and hard.

Cleve was but little more than a mile from the Box B. Ethel was there, and she had a message for him, but he didn't know it. It would have availed him nothing to have known it, even if he had the message.

The die was cast. He must come to

grips with King and his men. So he turned wearily back across the country with Old Gregg Norton. He would go home and put his house in order for such company as might come.

He wasn't going out in the open with his little band of men to fight the King's troops. Not yet a while, at least.

MEANTIME, King Ben and his men had stopped at the Fort.

The men wanted a few drinks and King wanted to see Gus.

"Seen anything of the Gault gang since yesterday?" the King asked.

"Not a one of 'em. Hasn't been a soul in the place since you an' the boys left yesterday."

"Well, I've been away from home too much. I'm going back to the ranch for two or three days maybe. What I wanted to tell you is this, if any strangers come around here, keep a close mouth. Things are going to happen, but the less you know about them the better, so I won't tell you anything."

"Trouble with Cleve Gault?" asked Gus.

"Likely, unless he backs up, and I don't think he will. He's the sort of fool who gets started and keeps going until he runs his neck square into a noose, but I don't want to talk about that. Time enough to talk when it's over. It may not be fit to talk about then."

Gus stood in the door and watched them ride away. Then he shook his head as he muttered to himself,

"It won't be fit for you to talk about, Benny, if you ever stand up an' try to shoot it out with Cleve Gault. They's somethin' about a fellow not sleepin' good with a crown on his head. Ben is gettin' sorta restless. We're apt to have a new king."

The King had no intention of riding with his troops into dangerous territory. He was going to stay right in his palace and direct activities from there. When he reached home, he spent the rest of the day arranging his campaign. There was but one man in his outfit who criticized the plans.

King's orders were very simple: "Go to the J G Bar to-night and take it apart. There is one woman there. Be careful she is not hurt. I don't make war on women."

"It can't be done," said Garvin.

"It can be done, and will be done," retorted King. "Glenn Taylor will be in charge. You'll just be one of the men and take orders from Glenn."

CLEVE GAULT was not deceiving himself about the gravity of his situation. He thought the King was fighting now mainly to hold his sway over that section of the country. If he won, nobody would ever question his methods. What he did to the J G Bar, he would claim was done in protection of his interests and the interests of the Box B, of which he was now manager.

Cleve supposed he had to fight the combined forces, numbering sixty-odd men, with his sixteen. It didn't occur to him to leave the old ranch. Even if it had, there was no place to go. Also, he knew neither Mrs. Gault, nor any of the men, would have gone with him.

So he set about preparing for attack, which he knew would come at night. Every mattress and blanket from the bunk shack was carried into the house. Abundance of water was brought in. Then all the saddle stock, except a mount for each man, was run into a deep valley a mile or more from the ranch.

Each man had saddled his own

horse, and when night fell they were all hidden in a deep draw, where there was a thicket a quarter of a mile back of the ranch house.

Everything was ready. Thick darkness came. Not a light was to be seen.

Suddenly there was the patter of hoofs as a lone rider came up the trail at the front of the house. The rider was near the front gate of the yard, when a single shot rang out on the still night and silence followed.

Listening tensely at an open window, Cleve thought that shot was a signal, but no others followed. All he could hear was a scuffling noise at the gate, a few quick steps, and all was quiet again.

It was half an hour before another sound was heard, and then it was the voices of men out by the bunk shack.

"They've made a sneak, fellows. There's not a thing left in this shack but the bare bunks. There's not a horse in the corrals, nor a saddle in the sheds."

"What do you suppose that fellow was doin' ridin' around the place alone?" asked one.

"Been off somewhere an' didn't know the gang had hid out, so he rode right into trouble. He won't trouble anybody else."

Cleve puzzled over that, for all his men were right there in the house with him. However, there was little time to ponder. Half a dozen men had grouped between the house and the bunk shack. Cleve could hear them plainly, but could see them only as a dim, indistinct blur.

"Maybe some of 'em are holed up in the house," suggested one.

"Better go tell Glenn Taylor first thing," said another.

"Yes, an' get cussed for bringin' up the whole outfit to take an empty

house. Come on. Let's find out if there's anybody in the place."

SILENCE was no longer of any value. They were going to investigate who was in that house, thought Cleve, so the sooner the better. Fire belched from the open window in three quick bursts.

One man fell and stayed down, two fell, scrambled up and got away, while three, untouched, sprinted back toward the big corral two hundred yards from the house, and were met by Glenn Taylor and the rest of his men.

"Here! Who's shooting?" asked Taylor.

"They're in the house," panted one of the men, "an' they're on the kill. They got Bessant—"

"Fine!" chortled Taylor. "We'll wipe out the whole gang so there'll be nobody left to talk."

"But there's the woman. The King said not hurt—"

"I know he did," growled Taylor, "but that was just for publication. When he sends us to clean up an outfit, he expects us to clean it, and he don't want to hear the details when it's over."

"Well, how are you goin' to get 'em out?"

"They'll come out themselves when it begins to get hot in there."

Cleve had heard none of this conversation, but he and his men were at the windows of the house. They had made a place of safety for Mrs. Gault in a little room, with mattresses laid against the walls, but she scorned to stay in it and walked about from window to window.

"Here they come!" called Cleve in a low tone, and the word was passed on.

Thinking they were safely cloaked

by representing the Spade Creek gangs of rustlers, the raiders came boldly on.

"Rustlers and killers, are we?" jeered Taylor. "Us poor devils tried to make an honest living in on Spade Creek, and they wouldn't let us. First they called us nesters, and then they called us thieves. After that they runs us ragged. This J G Bar outfit was the worst to ride us. To hell with their women. They didn't think about our women when they burnt our cabins."

"They shore didn't," said another.

"All right, let's go!"

But they didn't charge the house. Instead, they fell into a loud wrangle among themselves. One voice insisted monotonously:

"I won't stick to no damn' outfit that mistreats women!" Over and over again, the fellow declared his principles, while Glenn Taylor cursed him for a quitter.

"I won't do it!" the fellow declared hotly. "Any of you boys that are too decent to mistreat women, come on with me, an' we'll ride from here, an' let the rest of this gang go on to hell where they belong."

CLEVE and his men were completely deceived by this ruse. Under cover of the uproar, four men had crawled to the house. Not until light shot up from the four corners of the house did Cleve realize that it had been fired, right under his watchful eyes.

The assembled raiders sent up a yell, as the light grew until it caused them to stand out in bold relief. They were at the bunk house and well out of pistol range.

"Scatter, boys, and surround the house," ordered Glenn Taylor. "They will be coming out of there pretty soon. Don't let any get away. They might—"

Glenn Taylor pitched forward on his

face. Old Gregg Norton had been a buffalo hunter in his time. He picked up an old Sharp's buffalo gun from the corner, laid his face to the stock, and at its roar the heavy slug tore fair through Taylor's head.

Gregg was defending Jim Gault's widow and Jim Gault's cub. He would do more for them than for himself.

Other guns spoke, and two more men went down. The raiders didn't surround the house, but took refuge behind the bunk shack.

The house had been set afire with bundles of hay at all four corners, and the incendiaries had escaped back to their companions. For some reason the fires at the farther side had gone out, leaving only two burning. After the flaming hay had died down, the wood of the house was slow to ignite. There was a silence of five minutes, then the front corner burst into a bright blaze as the weather-boarding caught.

Inside the house could be heard the swift, crashing blows of an ax, as the sheathing was chopped away from the wall, just above the blaze, and one of the men caught up a bucket of water.

"Just hold it," ordered Cleve, "and when I tell you, throw it on a little at a time, with a dipper."

The man thought Cleve was crazy to let his house keep burning, when the small blaze could easily be put out.

"There she goes!" yelled Garvin, who had taken charge when Taylor fell. "Now get around 'em, before some get away."

Men started to run in both directions from the back of the bunk house. The light from the blazing structure was fair upon them.

The first two who sprang out went down. Gregg's old buffalo gun, and a long-barreled repeating rifle in the

hands of another man, were good for long distance, and the light was fine.

Norton had seen the day when he could put a slug just back of the shoulder of a running buffalo, and he could find the tender spot on a running man. The grim old foreman might die in this fight, but he would die hard and take along company with him.

The next two men to show themselves went down, but crawled back to shelter. No more showed themselves.

"Now you can throw that water on," ordered Cleve. "Throw it slowly, so it won't be wasted."

The water was poured over the inside of the exposed outer wall, just above the fire. It ran through cracks in the clapboard siding and trickled down the outside, every drop quenching flames.

"LISTEN," said Garvin. "They are chopping through the walls to put out the fire."

Cleve and his men were doing more than that. They were making a desperate effort, not only to protect the house, but to save themselves and Mrs. Gault.

The inside sheathing was cut away just above the floor, at each of the exposed corners. A small hole was cut through the weather-boarding near the floor, at each corner. There was still a full barrel of water in the house. The weather-boarding and foundation timbers at all the corners were made too wet to take fire easily.

Then Cleve put a man at each corner, and one at each window. If another attempt was made to fire the corners, they would never burn. The four sides of the house could be watched from the windows.

So, set to defend the old homestead to the last, Cleve and his men waited.

It seemed hours that there was no move made by the enemy. Cleve wondered that they had not shot into the house, in the hope of getting him or his men.

He couldn't understand, either, that there were not more of the raiders. He had planned to fight the combined forces of the Lazy K and the Box B. He had recognized Lazy K men, but not a Box B rider had he seen. Perhaps Dave Lane had told the truth, and the Box B outfit was not involved, after all. This gave him hope. He hadn't seen many men. They must be holding their main force in reserve.

While Cleve was pondering the situation in the house, there was a low-voiced consultation going on back of the bunk shack.

"We can't take 'em, Garvin," said one of the besiegers. "There's gunners in that house. They've got some of our men, an' if we don't git away from here pretty quick, there'll be nobody to tell what happened to us."

"I know we can't take 'em," retorted Garvin. "I told the King we couldn't do it, but—we've got to take 'em now. We played that we were the Spade Creek gang, but that won't go any more. Those fellows know every one of us, and they saw plenty in that light. Somebody saw Glenn Taylor, good. If we don't wipe 'em out now, our whole outfit, King and all, will have to leave this country. Nobody would overlook his trying to kill up Jim Gault's widow, no matter what he's got against Cleve."

"Well, what are we goin' to do about it?"

"We are going to take that house," said Garvin, grimly, "and we are not going to leave anybody to talk when it is all over."

"All right. You're boss, since Glenn's gone."

"Get some hay, then. We've got to fire that place. We'll make a big noise on this side, while two of you crawl up and place your kindling on the other side. As soon as you get it placed, lie down and keep close to the ground, for there is going to be some lead roaming around. When you are all set, we'll go round to the other side and keep 'em busy while the hay is placed on this side. Don't anybody set a fire until I yell, 'All right, let's go.' Then everybody light his hay, and the party will all be over, except maybe playing 'Home, Sweet Home,' and picking up our hats. Get busy, now."

THE demonstration started, and the ruse worked wonderfully. Too well, in fact. Garvin was no more cold-blooded than Taylor, but he was far more intelligent and should have sensed that something was wrong, but he didn't.

Cleve Gault had simply said to his men: "Don't waste any lead in the dark, boys. We haven't got any to waste, and we don't want to be out of cartridges when the final rush comes. They may make another light. If they don't daylight will come after a while. Keep low, let 'em shoot into the house, and—"

Cleve broke off as a bullet crashed through the head of one of his men who stood within a foot of him. A perfect storm of bullets swept through the walls and in at the windows on the side of the house toward the bunk shack. The house was being fairly shot to splinters.

Came a lull in the firing. Cleve found that three of his men were dead, and five more wounded. He managed to get his mother and the wounded into the little room with the padded and bullet-proofed walls, then went back.

Eight men were left, including himself. The fight was about over. As Cleve stepped out of the room, a storm broke on the other side of the house, and a bullet burned Cleve's left arm slightly, just below the shoulder. The whole army was in action, now. The house would soon be reduced to kindling, at that rate.

This was the beginning of the end. Cleve was convinced that the enemy had him. They knew that he and his men were in the house, and could bunch their fire on it, while all he and his men knew was that the invaders were somewhere out there in the darkness. They could have been seen by the gun flashes, but it was death even to try to look out one of the shattered windows.

Cleve turned toward the door of that little room where his mother was. They would never enter that until he was dead.

Suddenly, the firing ceased, and Garvin called out:

"All right, let's go!"

A moment later light flared, and glinted on the bits of glass that remained in the windows. Four shots crashed, almost as one, and the four incendiaries who had fired the four corners of the house went down as one man. Those holes in the wall had been well used by Cleve's men.

The raiders had started the rush. Garvin, leading them, was within fifty feet of the house when a slug from Gregg's old Sharp's tore through his liver. He spun around, and went down.

Leaden death was pouring from that house, in a perfect light, until suddenly all the fires went out. The hay had burned, and the wet wood had failed to ignite.

In the silence that followed, Garvin

lay on the ground, groaning terribly and begging his men to drag him away from the house. A voice called out:

"Hey, you fellers in there! Cleve Gault!"

"Well, what is it?" demanded Cleve.

"One of our men is hurt bad, and we want a truce until we can take him away."

"**T**HE only kind of truce you'll get is to gather up your dead and cripples, and get away from here. I'm willing to call it a drawn battle, now, and let it go. If you don't take that, it will be daylight pretty soon, and we'll kill all of you."

There was a moment of hurried conversation out there in the darkness, and then:

"All right, we'll do that."

"Go ahead, then, but no tricks. We won't fire another shot unless you do, but if you start firing again, we'll finish it."

Silence reigned about the battered old house, except for the scuffling feet of the raiders as they gathered up their dead and wounded.

Cleve stood at a smashed window, listening and keeping an eye out for treachery. A grim smile curved his lips. He had only eight men left, including himself, who were able to fire a gun, and there were not two dozen cartridges among them. He had been whipped to a standstill, if the enemy had only known it, but they had no leader, and panic had seized them.

"All accounted for," called a voice out at the corral, where the raiders had left their horses. "Let's load 'em an' ride for the cabins on Spade Creek."

"Still keeping up the lie," mused Cleve as he kept on listening until the drum of hoofs died out in the direc-

tion of the Spade Creek roughs. He wondered if he had been mistaken and these men were not Lazy K riders after all.

No, he couldn't be mistaken. He had seen Glenn Taylor, plainly, and he had heard names called that he knew. They were Lazy K men, but why were they going to the Spade Creek cabins?

It was almost daylight. The enemy was gone. Cleve and his men carried mattresses and blankets back to the bunk house. The wounded were taken there and made as comfortable as possible, while Mrs. Gault, silent as a wraith, bathed and bandaged their hurts, with the help of some of the men.

It was growing light by that time. Cleve and Old Gregg Norton took a look around the place. Lying just outside the front yard gate they found a dead horse, with a bullet hole neat between its eyes.

"Box B horse," said Old Gregg.

"Yes," replied Cleve, in a hard, cold tone. "Dave Lane lied to us after all. The Box B has been riding us all the time, and now there are only eight of us left. The next time—"

"**D**AVE LANE did not lie to you," came a voice from inside the old palisade yard fence.

Both men whirled, just as Ethel Bolan's white face showed above the top of the fence.

"Ethel!" cried Cleve. "Where—how—"

"I came here on that Box B horse to bring you a message. The horse was killed under me, just as I reached the gate. I didn't dare go to the house after that, and before I could get away the fight started. I couldn't go back home on foot, so I crouched against this fence all night. When those men

left, I got inside the yard, but I was still afraid to go to the house. Oh, it was terrible, but Cleve—"

"You say that Box B men were not with those fellows?" asked Cleve. His voice was cold. His old distrust of Ethel had come back to torment him.

"No! They never have been here. I—I know you thought I led you into a trap that night I came here, but—I did not, Cleve, I did not. I've got a message for you."

"Come on into the house," said Cleve, still suspicious. "It isn't much of a house, but we have made a little fire."

Mrs. Gault was still busy with her patients at the bunk house. Old Gregg discreetly remained outside.

"What is the message?" asked Cleve, searching Ethel's face with his cold, hard eyes as she sat before the fire.

"It is from Dave Lane."

"Dave Lane. It's probably a lie."

"No, Cleve, this is true. Dying men don't lie."

"Dying men?"

"Yes. Dave Lane is dead. He told me this with his dying breath, and cautioned me to tell it to no one but you."

"Who killed Dave?"

"Ben King murdered him, at our gate. I don't know why. Dave said you would know."

"I see. And the message?"

Ethel gave him Dave Lane's last message in a low tone, and as she finished, Cleve's blue eyes went almost black.

"So that is his message?" said Cleve. "I believe he gave it just as you have told it to me, but it is probably a lie. Lane was incapable of telling the truth, even on his death bed, though he does seem to have told it once. If what he said were true—"

Cleve broke off, and stood gazing down at the girl through half-closed eyes.

"If it is true, then what?" asked Ethel.

"It is only one more link in a chain I have been trying to put together. I can never complete the chain unless—"

Ethel looked up at him, with her undeniable story in her eyes, but Cleve refused to see it. He hesitated a moment, and went on:

"Ethel, I'm whipped. Only seven of my men are left that are able to ride—and not more than two dozen cartridges—with the whole world against me."

"No, no, no! I have never been against you, Cleve. I—"

"LET me go on while I can," Cleve interrupted. "I want to tell you before it is too late. I have loved you since I was a little boy, and have long meant to tell you of my love and ask you to marry me, but—"

Ethel was on her feet now, her eyes shining and her hands held out to him, but he stepped back from her and said:

"No! Sit down and let me tell you. God knows it is hard enough to do. You owe your father something, and I owe my father something. If they killed each other there was a cause for it. If either of them killed the other, he had a cause, and a just one. Unless I can solve the mystery of that killing there must always be a gulf between you and me. A gulf you could never forget. Unless I can prove—"

"How are you going to prove anything, Cleve, when they are both dead, and no one knows why?" asked Ethel as she resumed her seat and looked sadly into the fire.

"I don't know," replied Cleve. "That is why I am hopeless. If I had

time I might locate those army officers and learn something from them that would lead to a solution of the problem, but there is no time. I shall be killed before—"

"Oh, no, no, no! Don't say that, Cleve."

"I must face the facts. Ben King has set out to kill me. He has the power to do it and get away with it."

"But, Cleve, can't you—"

Ethel stopped. A door had opened, and Mrs. Gault was in the room. She saw her son talking to Ethel Bolan, the woman who had led him into one trap and was now probably trying to lead him into another.

"You—" she began, with venom in her tone.

"Mother!" It was the first time in his life that Cleve had spoken sharply to his mother. "Forgive me, mother, but don't speak until you understand."

He told her, then, of the dead Box B horse that lay at the gate, and of how Ethel came to be there. He explained that other visit, telling her that Ethel had warned him about the horses because she mistrusted King Ben, and that the Box B riders had never bothered them.

When he finished, Mrs. Gault inquired: "Why ain't the Box B riders helping us, then, like we always helped them when they had trouble?"

"They would be if I could command them," Ethel answered. "Mother and Earl went crazy, as they often do, and Ben King took advantage of it to make them worse."

"Well, there'll have to be some things proved, after what has happened, before I—" began Mrs. Gault.

"Let's not go into that, mother," said Cleve gently. "Ethel understands, and she doesn't blame us. The boys are bringing the horses in. I'll

have them put your saddle on one, Ethel, and—"

"I—I can't go home, Cleve," faltered Ethel. "Mother knew I was coming here, and she—"

"What! Can't go home?" demanded Cleve.

"No. Mother told me if I came here—"

"Huh!" snorted Mrs. Gault. "Stella Bolan is crazy. You can stay here, then, until somebody kills you. It ain't safe, but it's the best we got. Cleve, stir up the fire in that stove so I can make some breakfast before we starve to death."

CHAPTER XI.

THE LAST BATTLE AT FORT M'KINNON.

BREAKFAST at the Gault ranch that morning was a very quiet affair. None of the three at the table was talkative, and Cleve was literally speechless. He was thinking of his next move.

He didn't know how much damage he had done to the King's forces, but that would mean nothing to King, however many men he had lost. He could easily get more of the same kind. He employed the hardest characters in the cow country, because no one else could handle them, and he could drive them where he would.

Cleve knew what he was going to do, because it was the only thing left to do, and it was a gamble of life and death, with the odds all against him. He finished the meal, and then said:

"I'm going at once to hunt for Ben King. I've got to see him. I must talk to him before it is too late. I am going to make him come clean with me."

"But he would kill you!" cried

Ethel. "I tell you, Ben King is a cold murderer."

"No, Ethel, you are mistaken. Ben King will *try* to kill me. He will kill me if he can, as he has killed others, but he is not a murderer. Ben King is—or at least once was—a high-class gentleman. He killed Dave Lane. He had his gang wipe out some of my men, and try to get me. When such a man goes wild, there must be a powerful motive driving him. I believe he killed father and Mr. Bolan."

"Why, Cleve," said Mrs. Gault, "you told me you saw Ben's gun a minute after the killing and it hadn't been fired."

"I know I told you that. I was going to say he killed them, or had them killed. The room was crowded with men. It was dark in there, and thick with tobacco smoke. I couldn't see clearly what did happen. After the shots were fired the crowd stampeded from the place. Some other man could have shot them from the floor, and more than likely did, but Ben King must have known about it. I have asked him repeatedly, and he has refused to tell me. He is going to tell me when we meet again."

"But, Cleve, what motive could Ben King have for killing father and Mr. Gault?" asked Ethel. "They were the best friends he had."

"If I knew his motive," replied Cleve, "I would have the mystery solved. The chain is about complete against him. A reasonable motive for such a crime is all that is lacking. As to our fathers being Ben King's friends, there are men in the world to whom friends are friends, only within certain limits. Selfish men, such as Ben King, put themselves first."

"And you think you can make King confess the killing and the motive?"

"If I can get him where I want him I can force him to tell. If I can't—well, there is nothing else to be done. We have crippled his outfit a little, but he has ruined us. Half a dozen men could take us now, if they knew our condition. King can get more men. I can't. We can't fight them again. The only hope is to stop the trouble at its source, and I'm going to try."

"LOOKS as if you were right, Cleve," Mrs. Gault said calmly, "but you must take somebody with you."

"I'll take Gregg. The others must stay here to guard the place. There is no telling what moment King will strike again. Gregg and I are enough to get killed, if I fail."

Cleve rose from the table. He refused to meet Ethel's eyes. She saw him kiss his mother and leave the house, and her heart was breaking for just a word or two. At the bunk shack Cleve said:

"Boys, Gregg and I are going to the Fort. We'll have to split the cartridges with you. Gregg and I must have our guns full."

"You don't have to do that," Norton growled. "I found a full box of cartridges on the plate of the shack, by the side of a rafter."

"Good. Take what you need, Gregg. I want only six. If I'm not dead before they are gone, I won't require any more."

Mrs. Gault and Ethel stood on the old gallery and watched in silence as Cleve and Gregg rode away from the J G Bar. The widow looked at Ethel and saw her eyes fill with tears.

"Don't cry, Ethel. He'll come back."

"I—I'll die if he doesn't," sobbed Ethel.

"No, you won't. My man rode away and didn't come back. It hurts, but it don't kill. Sometimes I wish it did."

Those were hard words for a mother, but Mary Gault's heart was like lead. She was still grieving for Jim Gault, and now her only child was probably going to his death. What did Ethel know about grief? The widow's heart was breaking because the tears refused to come.

At the Lazy K, King Ben was in a cold rage. He had waited through the night for his men to come back with the news that they had crushed Cleve Gault and his little band of riders. The sun was up and shining, but not one of his men had returned.

Although King did not know it, his captains were both dead, along with many of his men. The little remnant of his army was cowering in the Spade Creek cabins at that moment, afraid to return to the ranch and face the King's wrath. If King had only known that, he might yet have saved some remnants of his power; but he had no dream of such a catastrophe.

The King had kept but one man at the Lazy K. That was Gil Thomas, the fastest and most accurate of the five picked gunners who had been with him the day before. All the rest had gone on that fatal raid, which had looked so easy to the King and to Glenn Taylor.

By mid forenoon King could stand it no longer. He would go to the post and see if Gus had heard anything. He must have action of some sort. Whatever else might be said of King Ben, no man could truthfully call him a coward.

When Cleve and Gregg reached the Fort they left their horses at the back of Gus Kottner's saloon and entered

through the back door. As they were ready to enter, Cleve said:

"Remember, Gregg, you are to lay off Ben King. I'll take care of him. You'll have your hands full with the others."

"Good morning, gents," greeted Gus from behind his bar. "What 'll it be this time?"

"Nothing, just now," replied Cleve, after returning the greeting, as he and Gregg took a position toward the back end of the bar.

NOTHING more was said for a minute. Gus stood with his hands on the bar, looking at his silent visitors. Presently he cocked his head in a listening attitude and started toward the door.

"Get back of your bar and stay there!" ordered Cleve, in a tone that clinked like ice.

Since seeing this young chap in action a few times, Mr. Kottner had developed a wholesome respect for him. He slipped behind the bar and showed no inclination to leave his post of duty.

There was a sound of hoofs. Only two horses were coming. A glance passed between Cleve and Old Gregg Norton which meant, "Only one apiece for us."

The day was fine and bright, and the inside of the saloon was dark by comparison, though the front door stood wide open. King Ben and his man entered side by side, and had reached the front end of the bar when Cleve called out:

"Put up your hands, gentlemen," knowing the order would not be obeyed.

Both of the newcomers went for their guns. Gil Thomas never got his. Old Gregg was taking no chances with one of the best gunmen in the country.

King's gun was almost clear of the holster, when Cleve's bullet knocked it from his hand. Like a flash, King stooped to recover it.

Cleve had holstered his own weapon and sprang, striking King and knocking him clear away from his gun. King whirled and started for the door, but Cleve was on him like a panther and bore him to the floor. Old Gregg joined him.

In a minute Ben King's hands were made fast behind his back. He was seated in a heavy chair, and his bonds made fast to the back of it.

Disarmed, manacled, helpless, he was still a haughty king. His face was white with rage, but for the moment he paid no attention. His black eyes were fixed in a burning stare on the man behind the bar, who had not said a word.

"Gus Kottner, is this your idea of loyalty?"

Gus started to stammer something.

"Shut up, Gus! I'm going to kill you for this."

King rested for a minute, then turned on his captors.

"I'll give you two thugs just ten seconds to turn me loose. If you don't, I'll have you skinned alive."

"No, you won't, Ben," said Cleve calmly, as he drew up a chair and sat down. "Your killers are not here, and I don't think they'd come if they knew I was here."

Then, turning to the barkeeper, Cleve warned: "Gus, you may be loyal to your King, but unless you think you'd be happier dead, you'd better not play with any gun under the bar, and you'd better not move from where you stand."

"Just what do you two fools think you're doing?" asked King, with a sneer.

"We know very well what we are

doing," replied Cleve. "I'm not making an enemy of the King. He was my enemy from the moment of my father's death. I've asked you two or three times how that killing occurred, and the last time I told you that you would tell me some time. Now, you are going to tell me."

"I've told you every time that Gault and Bolan killed each other," King replied, with an oath.

"Yes, and you have lied every time!"

KING'S face went scarlet and he fairly writhed. His voice was low, and every tone of insult that he could master was in it when he said:

"Nobody but a cowardly blackguard would insult a bound prisoner."

"I've told you that when your hands were free and you had your gun. If I didn't want to keep you alive a while, I'd turn you loose, give you your gun, then kill you."

King's face was livid, and the rage in his black eyes was frightful to see.

"Now, Ben," Cleve went on dispassionately, as if he were talking to a child, "it won't do any good to get all hot about this. My father may have killed Bolan. He could have done it. Bolan didn't kill my father, couldn't have done it, *because my father was shot in the left side*, and Bolan sat on his right!"

"You don't know that," said King, a bit calmer now. "You went home, and you never saw the wounds."

"No, I never saw them, but Red Herrick did, and he told me."

"There's another damned traitor," snarled King. He was not haughty at that moment.

"Perhaps so. He told me the night he ran away and failed to bury the man that Dave Lane killed. Dave didn't

tell me who that man was. Maybe you'll tell me. I don't suppose you'd mind, now that he is dead, and I would like to know."

"Damn you!" snapped King. "Do you know everything?"

"Not quite. That is why I am here asking you questions. I have an idea that if I had known everything in connection with that killing, I would have planted a bullet in you some time ago. One thing I don't know, which you are going to tell me, is where you got the two empty shells you dropped into Dave Lane's pocket as you and I passed him, leaving the gambling room just after my father and Trav Bolan were killed."

"Where did you get that fool idea?"

"Lane himself told me."

"Dave always was a damned liar, and that was his biggest. Do you think I'd trust a lousy hound like—"

"Men don't lie when they are dying. Dave told that after you shot him, and just a few moments before he passed out. He said that when he got to my father and Trav Bolan, neither of their guns had been fired. There was no one else about, so he slipped a cartridge from each gun and replaced them with the empty shells you had dropped into his pocket. I looked through the barrel of my father's old gun this morning, and it has not been fired since he cleaned and oiled it. Besides that, the firing-pin of his gun could never strike in the same place that cartridge was struck."

"You'd make a wonderful detective, wouldn't you?" King sneered.

"I don't think so, but I have pieced this thing together to my own satisfaction, and it fits. I believe Dave Lane's story, and I am now sure that my father and Trav Bolan didn't kill each other."

"Why stop there? Why not go on, and put your hand on the man who did kill them?"

WITHOUT a word, Cleve reached over and laid his hand on King's shoulder. The prisoner started violently and went white.

"What—what do you mean by that?" he asked.

"I'm just laying my hand on the murderer of my father and Trav Bolan, as you suggested."

"Don't talk nonsense, Cleve," said King, regaining his composure. "You know I showed you my pistol, and it had not been fired."

"Yes, I know you showed it to me, and there were six cartridges in it. Why did you show it to me? Where did you get the two empty shells? Why did you want an empty shell put in each of those guns, if you were not guilty? If you didn't fire those shots, who did, and why did you want to protect him? Answer those questions."

"You are so keen on those things, if those statements were true, you would certainly find out the answers to them. For my part, I don't mean to try to account for a lot of lies, or guesses."

Cleve got up and walked over to where King's gun lay on the floor. He picked the gun up, ejected the cartridges, and taking an empty shell from his pocket, slipped it into a chamber. He turned the shell to firing position and snapped the hammer on it.

Then, taking the shell out, he held it up to King's view. The firing-pin had fallen in the exact spot that it had fallen when the shell was originally discharged!

"Humph!" grated King. "You claim there is only one gun like mine in the world?"

"No, but I'm pretty sure that there is not another one like it in this part of Texas. It is a new model, double-action gun, and few men in this country would carry one if it were given to them."

"Perhaps you are right," snapped King. "The men in this country are peculiar. It strikes me that you are a bit eccentric yourself, not to call it by a harsher name."

"We'll not argue that point," Cleve went on. "You are guilty. You killed those two men; then you killed Dave Lane, to stop him from talking. You wanted to get me because you thought I knew too much and was likely to find out more. You have been the law in this country, but the situation is reversed, and I am the law, so far as you are concerned. I'm going to hang you, but not until I learn what your motive was."

"That is a very indefinite sentence. I may die of old age in the meantime," and King laughed outright—a forced laugh, however. "Listen to me, Cleve. You are making a monkey of yourself, but you are not a stark fool. Your mind could never conjure up a motive for my killing two of the best friends I had, or you would have done it. You know, or should know, that ninety-nine of every hundred men who are convicted and executed on circumstantial evidence, are murdered."

"I admit that the way you have summed up the evidence in this case, it points to my guilt, but the main thing is lacking—a motive, and there could be none. I have all the money I want, and I don't need the land and cattle of the two dead men. I am recognized King of this range, and can't gain more power and influence than I have."

"You have done a terrible thing, but— Turn me loose, apologize for

your mistakes, and go on back to your home. If you have lost through your mistakes, I'll make the loss good, and we'll go on as before."

CLEVE, wavered in the light of King's reasoning, but he wavered too long; and King got uneasy. His wonderful nerve was about to break. Hastily he went on:

"I'll do better than that, Cleve. Turn me loose, unarmed if you will, and I'll deed all my land and cattle to you. Only let me go free, with my horse under me, and—"

"Stop!" The King had gone too far. "You know I would never take blood money like that, to free a murderer. You are playing for time, and I am in a hurry."

King *was* playing for time. His one hope was that his men would return, find him gone, and come on to the Fort. There would be a chance for a rescue.

Suddenly, King sat erect and listened. There was the sound of thudding hoofs. Cleve and Old Gregg heard it, too. Cleve coolly placed his gun to King's head, and said:

"I may go, probably will go, but you go first. The moment one of your men shows in that door, you are through. If you know any way to keep them out, you'd better do it."

The horses stopped, out of sight from the door. There seemed only a few of them. Horror crept into the King's eyes, and he called out:

"Don't come in here! Taylor, Garvin, whoever you are, don't come in here!"

There was the clink of spurs outside, approaching the door. The hammer of Cleve's pistol clicked back. Three men stopped at the door, and looked in, but they were not Lazy K riders.

"What's going on in here?" asked a gray-haired man, whose stubby mustache writhed as he talked.

"These thugs are about to murder me," declared King. "I'm Ben King. You have heard of me."

"Yes, we have heard of you," said the gray-haired man, quite calmly. "Who is your friend with the gun?"

"Cleve Gault, a cold killer," replied King.

"Put that gun down, young man, it might go off. I'm Captain Rodney, of the Texas Rangers."

Cleve holstered his gun. To him, Texas Rangers were the ultimate law. Captain Rodney went on.

"One of our men, Sergeant Roby Daniels, went to the Lazy K ranch a few days ago. He didn't return, and we are looking for him. Have any of you gentlemen seen him?"

King was speechless, and Gus Kottner was extremely busy behind his bar.

"I don't know that I have ever seen Sergeant Daniels," said Cleve. "What sort of looking man was he?"

"Tall and spare. Very light yellow hair, and a deep red mark extending down on his forehead, about an inch below the edge of his hair, which would never be noticed unless his hat were off. He also had very large buck teeth."

GUS was now on the verge of collapse. Cleve, also, recalled that dead face. No one could ever forget it. King's smoldering black eyes were fixed on Cleve and the Ranger. He was listening to every word.

"Yes, I saw him," said Cleve.

"Where was he?"

"In a coffin, at the undertaker's shop across the way."

"I see," said Rodney grimly. "We supposed he had been killed. I wouldn't have let him come into this country alone if I had known he was coming. He was a venturesome fellow, and then I suppose he wanted the reward. Who killed him, Mr. Gault?"

"I'm not positive. The undertaker told me that Dave Lane brought the body to him before daylight, told him to keep it hid until night, and then bury it. I think Dave Lane killed him."

"That's strange. Roby wasn't after Dave Lane. Where is Dave?"

"Dave Lane is dead," said Cleve. "Was there a reward for him?"

"No. The case against Dave was dismissed two years ago. He should have known it, for the papers were sent to him, in care of the Lazy K ranch."

King Ben sat looking at the two men and trying to lick his dry lips. His face was bloodless; his black eyes had the expression of a dumb animal at bay.

"It's just as well," said Cleve. "Ben King killed Dave, and if there had been a reward it would have to be paid to Ben's heirs."

"What do you mean by that?" asked the Ranger captain.

"I'm going to hang Ben King."

"No, you are not. It is Ben King that we are after."

"But he murdered my father."

"I heard about that, and suspected King," said Rodney, "but the law will have to take its course, now. He is wanted—"

"I don't care where he is wanted," said Cleve. "I'll yield him to you only if he is to be tried for that murder first."

"I'll agree to that."

King sat cold and haughty, now. He had spoken no word for minutes, but he was a man who never gave up a

fight, no matter what the odds against him.

"Untie him, boys, and put the cuffs on him," said the captain, stepping back.

As King's hands came free, he jerked them in front of him, and sprang. He clutched the gun of the Ranger in front of him, dragged it from the holster as he rose to his feet.

But for the numbness of his hands, from being tied so long, he might have won freedom.

A single shot crashed, and the King fell, as Captain Rodney holstered a smoking gun.

IT was ten minutes later. The King was not yet dead, but was rapidly approaching the end. Cleve Gault had given him a drink of water and as he was taking the glass away, King said, weakly:

"Cleve, I want to talk to you, and I want only you and the captain to hear it."

The others stepped away, and he went on: "I have done you a lot of wrong, now I am going to make such amends as I can. I'm still a gentleman. I committed a crime, back in—the country where I grew up, but the captain can tell you about that, I won't have time. I escaped to Texas and changed my name. For ten years I lived the life of an honest gentleman; I was no harder than my neighbors. But, on the day that I killed your father and Bolan, I learned that they knew of my crime. They were my friends, but no man ever meant as much to me as my life and freedom. I saw a chance to kill them, and thought I could get away with it. I thought no one else in this country knew my history. I shot them both with that double-action gun, threw the

shells out and replaced them with fresh cartridges, before you got to me. The rest of that, you know.

"You had everything except the motive. Jim Gault and Trav Bolan were two of the best men I ever knew. My only motive was fear, and the law of self-preservation. I'm still a gentleman. A gentleman can't be hanged. I knew I had no chance to get away, so I—I forced the captain to shoot me. Thank you, captain."

King closed his eyes and shuddered, and that was the end of the reign of King Ben.

"What was his real name?" Cleve asked the captain, a little later.

"I don't think that is important," replied Captain Rodney slowly. "His family are real people, and no good can come of humiliating them."

"Very well," said Cleve. "There is one favor that you can do me, if you will. Go to the Box B, and tell this story to Mrs. Bolan and her son. They will believe you."

"I'll do that gladly, Mr. Gault."

Half an hour later, after the King and his fallen henchman had been laid out in Red Herrick's abandoned shop, Cleve and Gregg Norton rode with the Rangers to where the trail forked beyond the river.

There the Rangers went on to the Box B, to convince Mrs. Bolan and Earl of their error. Cleve Gault, with his faithful old foreman, rode on to the J G Bar, where Cleve meant to claim the woman he loved, and set about rebuilding his broken home.

As the little party rode away from the Fort, Gus Kottner said to himself: "There goes our new ruler." He glanced across to the undertaker's shop and murmured: "The King is dead; long live the King!"

THE END.



"It belonged to a man the Vigilantes hanged"

Evidence

Ferret Frazer thought his conscienceless pickpocket fingers would grab a fortune in Alaska—but the Northland has its own mysterious and inexorable plans

By JOHN A. THOMPSON

FERRET FRAZER slouched into the Alaska Hardware and Mine Supply Emporium in Golden City and asked to see some revolvers. A cigarette drooped from the corner of his watery mouth. He was thin-lipped, small. His eyes, cold, gray, cunning, flashed quickly like sunlight on a frozen Arctic sea.

Eustace Jacobs, proprietor of the emporium, leaned forward, resting the knuckles of his huge, gnarled hands on the rough, waist-high wooden counter and nodded understandingly. Golden City was a young and very turbulent Alaska mining camp, and most of its citizens always went well

heeled. One by one he brought out his full display of six-guns for Ferret's inspection, but his customer admitted glumly that the prices were too high. A last hope dawned on the storekeeper.

"How about a second-hand forty-five? I got a good one. Belonged to Bill Tigerman before the Vigilantes strung him and three others up to a pole down the street."

Ferret examined the gun anxiously, turning it over slowly in his outstretched, clammy palm.

"How much?"

Jacobs told him, adding: "It's got a couple of notches cut into the butt; however, I guess that won't bother you

none. It's a mighty nicely balanced weapon."

Ferret made some rapid mental calculations about his finances, which he meant to better by morning. He bought the gun and a box of cartridges and left the store. Four silver dollars still clanked in his otherwise empty pockets.

Frazer spent two of them for ham and eggs, pie and coffee in Murphy's Greasy Bowl Restaurant, invested another fifty cents in a package of cheap cigarettes, and sauntered into the Golden City Saloon to watch some prospectors playing Kelly pool in the back room.

At eight thirty he announced loudly to every one in general and no one in particular that he felt sick and was going home to bed. A few of the players looked up as if they hadn't noticed his presence before, but no one made any inquiries or asked him to stay. When he reached his hotel Ferret took especial pains to tell the clerk that he didn't feel well and was going to bed.

He went straight to his ground floor room. Removing his shoes, he dropped them to the floor with a clatter. More alibi. Ferret was scared. He had no heart for these more enterprising forms of road agency. He was a dip, a cheap crook, a jostler who could slink in and out of crowds, slippery as an eel, slit a pocket and pinch a wallet; but coming to Alaska had been dumb.

He realized what a big mistake it had been almost the minute he reached the teeming, gold-mad camp at Golden City. He had anticipated half-drunken miners with fat pokes, bulging with dust and easy to pluck. But he found that when the men thronged to the bars the first thing the majority of them did was pass their sacks of gold over to the bartender.

"Weigh it up, Gus, and let me know when it's gone. Plenty more where that come from," they'd say.

ALL he wanted now was a chance to make a stake that would provide him with enough funds to get back to the States. The chance had come, he told himself.

The summer mining season was drawing to a close, and night frosts had rid the country of the worst of the mosquitoes. The first miner to announce his intention of returning to Nome for the winter was old man Gilligan. He was a veteran prospector, past seventy, long and lean, tough and wiry as seasoned oak.

Night, when the moon was out and a myriad stars dotted the bright northern sky, was the customary time of travel for those who had long marches to make. The air was crisp and a man stepped out smarter than under the blaze of a hot sun. The frost made the trails firmer underfoot when they were frozen. Slipping along on the clayey mud of daytime warmth was hard on the legs.

Ferret had everything all planned. He knew just where the trail turned through the willow thicket on Crimp Creek to meet the flimsy cable bridge strung across the roaring, white-crested stream that raced hissing past big dark boulders that tried to block its bed. He knew within five minutes the time Gilligan was leaving, knew the old man would take the beaten trail; and knew that he could short-cut over the divide and by hurrying beat him by at least half an hour to the bridge.

He didn't expect much resistance from the old sourdough. Nevertheless Ferret realized fully that he intended to murder the old man. Dead men

never take the witness stand and Ferret was a sure-thing gambler.

He put his shoes on quietly and slipped out the back door unnoticed. Keeping close to the shadows he reached the outskirts of town. He struck out over the divide and was panting when he reached the summit. Perspiration beaded his forehead though the night was clear and crisp; but in the fear that he might be late, he ran down the other side. But at the clump of willows he stepped for a moment out onto the moonlit trail and reassured himself with a glance at his watch.

Shortly thereafter a drifting bank of clouds began to obscure the moon and blot out the twinkling stars.

The tense wait seemed longer than it was. Then Ferret peering from his hiding place saw the dim, stooped figure of an old man swaying steadily down the trail. He used a long wooden staff to aid his plodding steps.

Ferret jumped into his path. "Stick 'em up!" he barked.

His six-gun barked and an orange spurt of flame cut into the night even as he spoke, but his shot went wild. Old man Gilligan ducked from the murderous lead as his hand reached for his gun. The weight of the old sourdough's pack overbalanced him as he bent over and sent him sprawling to the ground. Ferret fired again. He was almost on top of Gilligan, but his hand shook. Gilligan's revolver spat lead and Ferret leaped on him, firing as he jumped.

Gilligan had received his death wound, but with his last expiring breath he fought and clawed at his assailant. Ferret dropped his gun in the struggle, his fingers sought the old man's scrawny throat, found it, and squeezed with all their strength.

Gilligan's hands dropped limply to his sides. He lay still. He was dead.

Feverishly Ferret took out his pocket knife and cut the lashings that had held the old man's pack. He rolled the dead prospector on his back, found two heavy canvas bags tied tightly at the neck with strong cord.

Ferret wanted to run, but he remembered he still had something to do. He bent down again beside the warm body, felt around for his gun. His fingers closed on the cool steel barrel, and he carried it halfway across the cable bridge before he flung the weapon in a high arc out into the raging waters of the creek.

"There goes the evidence. Let 'em try and prove I done it, now!" Ferret's voice was a low exultant snarl.

MORNING found him in bed with the covers pulled up tightly around his neck. He slept and there was a smile on his sallow face as he dreamed of the trip he would soon be taking back to the States. Hidden under a loose floor board under the bed in his room were two bulging sacks of gold dust. Under his pillow were three twenty-dollar gold pieces that he had found on the top of one of the sacks, an unexpected bit of good fortune. Now he could call a doctor, strengthen his alibi.

When Frazer woke up a steady drizzle of fine rain was drumming on the window pane. With an effort he roused himself, dressed partially and went out to the front desk. He looked tired, haggard.

"I feel rotten. I'm sick. Get me a doctor."

The clerk stared at Ferret a moment.

"Yeah, you look as if you ought to be in bed. I'll send around for Doc Hawley."

"Thanks, buddy. Tell him to make it snappy."

Ferret went back to his room and climbed into bed again, smiling to himself at his own cunning.

He had gone to bed last night saying he was ill, and had called for a doctor in the morning. No one had seen him leave town or reënter it. He was sure of that. And he was right: no one had.

Presently Ferret heard a knock on his door.

"Come in, Doc," he called. "Door ain't locked."

Five men filed in. Ferret was amazed, disappointed. He didn't like the grim looks on their faces. He pulled the covers up under his chin.

"Nice of you guys to come and see a feller when he's sick. But where's the doctor?"

Ferret looked blankly from one stern pair of eyes to another. None of his visitors smiled. He noticed that Jacobs of the Emporium was among the group.

"You won't need no doc," one said. "We come to git yuh for the low-down dirty murder of poor old man Gilligan."

The spokesman had a deep, boom-

ing voice. His hand hovered near the gun belt at his waist.

"The what? Why? Say, what the hell? You guys are crazy. I come to bed last night sick. I just sent for Doc Hawley. Ain't left here all night."

Ferret wished his tongue wouldn't stick in the roof of his mouth so when he was trying to sound indignant. The visitors looked from one to another solemnly.

The spokesman reached in the deep pocket of his mackinaw and pulled therefrom a revolver, distinctly adorned with two bold notches cut into the butt.

"Jacobs says this here is Bill Tiger-man's gun and he sold it to you yesterday. We found it alongside of Gilligan's body. And what makes it look worse for yuh and leaves no doubt but what yuh deliberately murdered Gilligan in cold blood is the fact that the old man was unarmed. We searched high and low but couldn't find no gun that might have been his, nowhere. Funny, too, because he was wearin' a holster."

Ferret bounded out of bed with a scream—bounded straight into the waiting arms of the Vigilantes' spokesman.

THE END.

COMING SOON!

W. C. TUTTLE'S

latest novel

THE TRAIL OF DECEIT

The Men Who Make The Argosy



F. V. W. MASON

Author of "Captain Nemesis," "Death's Domain," "Mad Anthony's Legion," etc.

I SUPPOSE I come by my love of adventure quite honestly, since from the time of my family's arrival in this country in 1632, members of it have served, almost without break, in both the Army and the Navy. It is, therefore, natural, I think, that I should attempt to describe those stirring scenes in which many of them made names for themselves.

The tendency toward affairs martial nearly led to the extinction of my family during the Civil War, when some fifteen out of seventeen failed to answer the rollcall at the end of that great struggle.

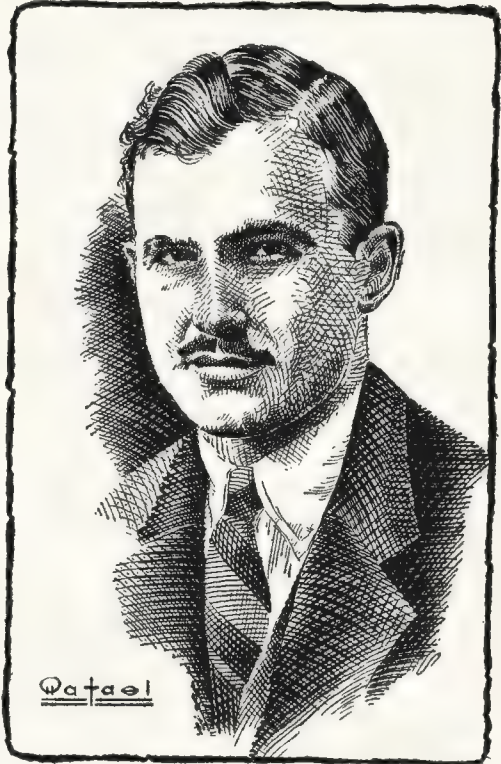
Due to a severe but fortunately overcome childhood disease, I was able to devote much time to reading, preferably history. This, coupled with the fact that my family traveled to Europe frequently during the pre-war period, gave me what I fondly hope to be a reasonably observant mind and a broad outlook. Due to the fact that my grandfather served as consul-general in both Berlin and Paris, I had the opportunity to understand much of the European point of view.

Before the war my brother and I were always in the woods during the hunting season and out of doors most of the rest of the time.

When the war broke out we both made strenuous efforts to join the French army, though we were much below the age limit. After waiting two years I succeeded in my efforts and achieved my goal in getting overseas. After a brief service with the French I was commissioned as lieutenant in the Interpreters' Corps of the American Army and served in the capacity of liaison officer for the balance of the war. I was fortunate or unfortunate enough to get a good deal of first hand experience in several offensives.

Finally I returned to this country in July, 1919, and settled down to the comparatively uninteresting business of getting a degree from Harvard University. During the summers of that period I traveled extensively. First on a joyous land cruise in a dilapidated flivver from Marblehead to British Columbia, then down the Pacific coast into Mexico. I also witnessed the exciting times in Germany when the mark commenced its meteoric descent into worthlessness.

Following my graduation I drifted from one occupation to another, apparently undecided as



to what to do. During that period I made several long trips into Central America and the Antilles as well as managing a long voyage through Eastern Europe. I had many quaint and somewhat startling adventures in Hungary, Roumania, Jugo-Slavia and Poland, some of which I hope to tell some day.

Eventually I chanced to meet a friend who had been an English instructor at the university. He asked me if I had done any writing and was kind enough to say that some of my work at college showed traces of promise. Following his suggestion I started once more, finding it congenial above all other occupations, and have kept after it ever since. I find great enjoyment now in writing historical romances which I hope will some day serve to amuse and possibly instruct my small son who seems to have already developed the adventurous, inquisitive tendency of the family to an alarming degree.



Argonotes

The Readers' Viewpoint



MAD ANTHONY'S LEGION

IN "Mad Anthony's Legion," by F. V. W. Mason, which opens in this issue, we publish another authoritative and distinctly worth while American historical story. As it is laid in a period of our history that has seldom been a field for fiction and that is little known, the author has a few explanatory remarks to add to it. Mr. Mason:

How often history repeats itself. As after the recently fought Great War, there was a great clamor for disarmament after the Revolution, Fanatics swiftly wrecked the magnificent army that remained after the seven-year struggle for independence. Their zealotry carried them past the bounds of reason, and left the great western frontiers garrisoned by a handful of dispirited, underpaid and underfed troops.

The British, although having ceded the Ohio Valley and the country draining into the Great Lakes, did not evacuate such important posts as Mackinac, Detroit and Fort Miami. Though the American Commissioners abroad protested in vain, the Canadian Governor-general sought to keep this land even though Napoleon's Wars kept British man power fully occupied in Europe. The British strategists tried to make up for the deficiency by inciting the Indian tribes to war against the United States. Three expeditions, badly equipped and badly organized, were sent against the hostile tribes with disastrous results. General Josiah Harmar was swiftly beaten in 1790 and General Arthur Saint Clair was routed with great slaughter.

Faint hearts in Congress, discouraged by these reverses, advocated the abandonment of the Ohio territory, but President Washington determined on a final effort to save these rich territories for the United States. In the face of bitter opposition he appointed Anthony Wayne, better known as Mad Anthony, as major general in command of the regular army, with instructions to subdue the hostile tribes and to drive out the British from their illegally held forts. So badly disorganized and demoralized was the regular army that Wayne

commenced a reorganization, calling the new army the Legion of the United States.

Wayne spent the winter of 1792-93 in recruiting troops near Pittsburgh and drilling them for active service in the reorganized army.

In the spring of 1794 Wayne advanced along the Great Maumee and in August of that year he dealt the confederated Indians a crushing blow at the battle of Fallen Timbers.

Little credit has been given to this fearless old martinet for the results he achieved in the face of the overwhelming opposition and hindrances of all kinds.

"Mad Anthony's Legion" is an endeavor on my part to show something of this great man's indomitable courage.

F. V. W. MASON.

GENUINE LOCAL COLOR

THE genuine homely quality of William Merriam Rouse's Adirondack Mountain stories is natural: Bill is an Adirondack mountaineer himself—yes, a typical Bildad Roader. Off for a trip in the hills with his gun and his dog—always with his dog!—and Bill is happy.

Recently he visited our office and we noticed that he gave evidence of a peculiar uneasiness. It wasn't sunburn or poison ivy, he said. When we asked for a further explanation he was peculiarly reticent, but this morning's mail brought the following:

OH, FLEA WITH ME!

How lonely he who ne'er has had
A flea upon his hide!
My dog and I regard our fleas
With something close to pride.

A puppy dog by nature is
Arranged to scratch for fleas—
A pleasure 'tis for dogs to scratch,
And nature aims to please.

Hence puppy dogs are blest with fleas,
And fleas with many a hound:
They skip and duck the scratching paw—
No flea is muscle bound.

On man the flea is helpful when
The heart is full of woe.
No man can scratch and mourn for long—
The mourning has to go.

So thus in nature here we see
A perfect triple play;
The dog gives fleas to master in
His simple doggish way,

The master scratches self and dog,
The dog, he scratches more,
The flea has e'en the exercise
His spirit doth adore.

WILLIAM MERRIAM ROUSE.

AND now a Bedford-Jones booster:

Thomaston, Ga.

Sure, I like ARGOSY lots better than any of those higher priced magazines. How do you get such good material and then sell your "mag" for only a dime? All the stories are good, but H. Bedford-Jones takes my vote every time. Let's have some more *John Solomon* novels.

DEXIE MILLS.

YOUR CHOICE COUPON

Editor, ARGOSY,
280 Broadway, N. Y. C., N. Y.

The stories I like best in this issue of the magazine are as follows:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____

5-17



Looking Ahead!

TALBOT MUNDY

makes a reappearance in ARGOSY with a colorful three-part story about Quorn, the ex-Philadelphia taxi-driver, and Asoka, his huge elephant charge—and the turmoil they cause in the distant Indian State of Narada. When Eastern intrigue and Western determination clash there is action galore in

The Affair at Kaligaon

GEORGE F. WORTS

gives us a complete novelette of baffling and spirited adventure in

The Diamond Trail

J. ALLAN DUNN

takes us to the Rio Grande with the Border Patrol in

Lost Island

COMING TO YOU IN THE ARGOSY OF MAY 24th



Honk



Luther

Five Features
Ten Departments
and
Miscellany

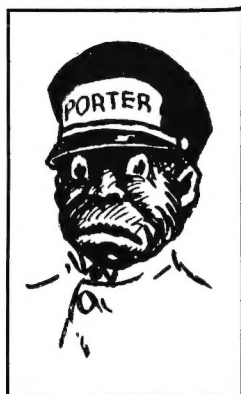
Full Tonnage *with all the* **RAILROAD STARS**

HONK and HORACE, by Emmet F. Harte. These characters have lived in the minds of Railroad men for more than Twenty Years and you can find them today funnier than ever!

LUTHER LEGHORN, J. E. Smith's famous Country Station Agent. His droll observations in the hills of Indiana are charged with rare humor and homely philosophy!

HIRAM, Boomer from Aroostook. The long, lean, yellow-haired pertater hopper from Presque Isle, Me., has been brought back with a roar and a bang by Charles W. Tyler.

IPECAC INGALLS, Pullman Po'tah—You want to follow this creation of ARTHUR K. AKERS—A brand new series with as funny a darky as ever lived on the printed page!



Ipecac



Horace



Hiram

Two True Stories
Many Pictures
Five Shorts
One Serial

You just can't miss this

MAY RAILROAD MAN'S MAGAZINE

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A Munsey Publication

"NATURE NEVER HINTS in Vain"

[John Greenleaf Whittier, 1807-1892]

"COMING EVENTS CAST
THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE"

[Thomas Campbell, 1777-1844]

AVOID THAT FUTURE SHADOW

by refraining from over-
indulgence, if you would
maintain the modern fig-
ure of fashion

We do not represent that
smoking **Lucky Strike** Ciga-
rettes will bring modern figures
or cause the reduction of flesh.
We do declare that when tempt-
ed to do yourself too well, if
you will "Reach for a **Lucky**"
instead, you will thus avoid
over-indulgence in things that
cause excess weight and, by
avoiding over-indulgence, main-
tain a modern, graceful form.



When Tempted
**Reach
for a
LUCKY**
instead

It's toasted"

Your Throat Protection — against irritation — against cough.